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SOCIAL SERVICES STUDENTS' EDUCATION AND PURPOSES IN LIFE

A CASE STUDY FROM FINLAND

Niina Manninen

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this Ph.D. thesis is to examine the life purposes of Finnish social services students. In particular, the students' life purposes and their experiences of purpose are examined from the viewpoint of how helping unknown others and advocating for social improvements are integrated into personal meaning and how a focus on benefiting others appears in the students' perspectives. Life purposes are personally meaningful, but also intended to benefit others (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003).

The thesis is based on research presented in three articles. Article I addresses the content of students' life goals and how the students' justify their goals through focus on self and on others. Article II presents students' purpose profiles, their perceptions of the role of purpose, and why these students want to help unknown others. In Article III the focus is on students' most influential field education experiences and how learning in service influenced their experience of purpose, especially from the standpoint of helping and social advocacy. The context of this case study is the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and its social services degree whose framework is social pedagogy.

The analysis is based on survey data, which included both fixed and open-ended questions. A mixed-methods approach is operationalized by using both qualitative and quantitative data analyses. The results presented in Articles I and II are based on a semester start survey (N=151) during the fall of 2015. Article III (N=113) presents the responses of pre- and post-field education surveys during the same semester. Validated instruments are used as are both deductive and inductive content analyses.

The analysis shows that the most important life goals for the students were close relationships and hedonistic goals, such as leading an exciting life. Helping was rated as the third-most important life goal on a Likert scale, yet other-focused, value-based justifications for it are somewhat lacking in the open answers. Primarily, the students mostly provided self-focused justifications for their long-term life

goals, and perceived the role of purpose as leading to a happy and pleasurable life rather than to a value-driven life. Overall, it appeared that the students perhaps aimed at finding purpose in familial matters and, to some extent, in the pursuit of happiness and helping others.

Most of the students could be described as representing a Dabbler profile. They had already experienced a sense of purpose in their lives, but were still seeking new purposes. They felt confident and skillful in actualizing their life goals, yet they did not seem to be aware of the values that steer their lives. Approximately one-fourth of the students represented the profile of the Purposeful and approximately one-fifth fit the profile of a Dreamer. Purposeful students define the values that direct their lives and their helping activities more often than other students.

Through field education, the students' sense of purpose developed, but the importance of helping goals remained the same, albeit on a relatively high level. The students' confidence in helping and in social advocacy as lifetime pursuits increased during field education. It appears that the increased sense of purpose after field education is in some ways related to the experiences of a sense of community, learning professional competencies, and increased self-awareness.

It seems important to develop social services students' understanding of their purpose in life and the values that could direct their lives and their abilities to help others. This could promote the students' satisfaction and commitment to their future profession in helping and increase their overall wellbeing. Integrating a life purpose approach into social pedagogy seems not only relevant, but also imperative in order to support students' understanding of themselves and their connectedness to the social, communal aspects of genuine purpose.

Keywords: social services students, purpose in life, purpose in helping others, social pedagogy, learning in service

Helsingin yliopisto, Kasvatustieteellinen tiedekunta
Kasvatustieteellisiä tutkimuksia, numero 49

Niina Manninen

Sosionomiopiskelijoiden koulutus ja elämän tarkoitukset
Tapaustutkimus Suomesta

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän väitöskirjan tavoitteena on tutkia suomalaisten sosionomiopiskelijoiden elämän tarkoituksia. Opiskelijoiden elämän tarkoituksia sekä tarkoituksen kokemuksia tutkitaan erityisesti siitä näkökulmasta, miten tuntemattomien auttaminen ja sosiaalinen asianajo integroituvat opiskelijoiden henkilökohtaiseen merkityksellisyyden kokemukseen, ja kuinka muiden eduksi toimiminen näkyy opiskelijoiden käsityksissä. Elämän tarkoitukset ovat henkilökohtaisesti merkityksellisiä, mutta niiden tietoinen tavoite on myös hyödyttää muita (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003).

Väitöskirja pohjautuu tutkimukseen, jonka tulokset esitellään kolmessa artikkelissa. Opiskelijoiden elämäntavoitteiden sisältöä, ja sitä, kuinka opiskelijat perustelevat tavoitteitaan itseään tai muita fokusoiden tarkastellaan artikkelissa I. Opiskelijoiden elämän tarkoituksen profiileja, näkemyksiä elämän tarkoituksen roolista sekä sitä, miksi opiskelijat haluavat auttaa tuntemattomia kartoitetaan artikkelissa II. Artikkelissa III syvennytään opiskelijoiden merkityksellisiin työharjoittelukokemuksiin, ja kuinka opiskelijoiden asiakastyöhön liittyvä oppiminen vaikutti heidän kokemukseensa elämän tarkoituksesta erityisesti auttamisen ja sosiaalisen asianajon näkökulmasta. Tämän tapaustutkimuksen konteksti on Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulun sosiaalialan tutkinto-ohjelma, jonka viitekehyksenä on sosiaalipedagogiikka.

Tutkimuksen analyysit perustuvat kyselylomakeaineistoon, joka sisälsi sekä luokka-asteisia että avoimia kysymyksiä. Monimenetelmäisyyttä sovelletaan lähestymistapana käyttäen sekä laadullista että määrällistä aineiston analyysia. I ja II artikkeleissa esitettävät tulokset perustuvat kyselylomakeaineistoon syyslukukauden 2015 alussa (N=151). Artikkelin III (N=113) tulokset kuvaavat kyselylomakevastauksia ennen harjoittelua ja sen jälkeen samana lukukautena. Analyysissä käytetään validoituja instrumentteja sekä induktiivista että deduktiivista sisällönanalyysiä.

Analyysi osoittaa, että opiskelijoiden tärkeimmät elämäntavoitteet liittyvät läheisiin ihmissuhteisiin sekä hedonistisiin tavoitteisiin, kuten jännittävään elämään. Likertin asteikolla auttaminen sijoittuu kolmanneksi tärkeimmäksi elämäntavoit-

teeksi, mutta muihin ihmisiin kytkeytyvät ja arvoperustaiset auttamisen perustelut ovat avoimissa vastauksissa vähäisiä. Pääsääntöisesti opiskelijat argumentoivat elämän tavoitteitaan heihin itseensä kytkeytyvillä perusteluilla ja elämän tarkoituksen päämäärä on elää onnellista ja miellyttävää elämää pikemmin kuin arvoihin perustuvaa elämää. Yleisesti ottaen opiskelijat ehkä pyrkivät löytämään elämän tarkoituksensa perhesuhteista, ja jossain määrin onnellisuuden tavoittelusta ja muiden auttamisesta.

Useimpien opiskelijoiden voidaan kuvata edustavan Elämän tarkoituksen etsijän profiilia. He jo kokevat jossain määrin elämän tarkoitusta, mutta jatkavat elämän tarkoituksen etsintää. He kokevat olevansa luottavaisia ja taidokkaita omien elämän tavoitteidensa toteuttamisessa, mutta eivät vaikuta olevan tietoisia niistä arvoista, jotka ohjaavat heidän elämäänsä. Arviolta noin neljännes opiskelijoista edustaa Elämän tarkoituksen löytäneitä henkilöitä ja noin viidennes Unelmoijan profiilia. Elämän tarkoituksen löytäneet kuvaavat muita useammin arvoja, jotka ohjaavat heidän elämäänsä sekä auttamiseen liittyvää toimintaa.

Työharjoittelun myötä asiakastyössä opiskelijoiden kokemus elämän tarkoituksesta kehittyi, mutta auttamiseen liittyvien tavoitteiden merkitys pysyi samalla, joskin jo alun perin suhteellisen korkealla tasolla. Opiskelijoiden luottamus omiin auttamisen ja sosiaalisen asianajon taitoihin elämäntavoitteena kasvoi työharjoittelussa. Työharjoittelussa lisääntynyt elämän tarkoituksen kokemus näyttää olevan jollakin tavalla yhteydessä yhteisöllisyyden kokemuksiin sekä ammatillisen osaamisen kehittymiseen ja lisääntyneeseen itsetuntemukseen.

Vaikuttaa siltä, että sosionomiopiskelijoita olisi tärkeä auttaa ymmärtämään elämän tarkoitustaan ja arvoja, jotka voisivat ohjata heidän elämäänsä ja auttamispyrkimyksiään. Tämä voisi lisätä opiskelijoiden tyytyväisyyttä ja sitoutumista tulevaan auttajan ammattiin sekä lisätä yleisesti heidän hyvinvointiaan. Elämän tarkoituksen näkökulmien kytkeminen sosiaalipedagogiikkaan ei vaikuta pelkästään relevantilta vaan välttämättömältä, kun opiskelijoita tuetaan itseymmärryksessä ja liittymisessä elämän tarkoituksen sosiaalisiin ja yhteisöllisiin ulottuvuuksiin.

Avainsanat: Sosionomiopiskelijat, elämän tarkoitus, auttaminen elämän tarkoituksena, sosiaalipedagogiikka, asiakastyössä oppiminen

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I want to thank each and every person who supported me on this journey. Particularly, I want to thank my supervisors Kirsi Tirri and Elina Kuusisto, both of whom have provided constructive and encouraging feedback. I have learned a lot from you, not only in terms of how research is often a pure joy and includes moments of wonderful insights and discoveries, but also about hard, diligent, and persistent work. Thank you for supporting me along the way in so many different ways. I also want to express my gratitude to my thesis pre-examiners, Professors Martin Ubani and Kati Tervo-Niemelä, for their insightful comments on my work. I also want to thank Docent Seija Mahlamäki-Kultanen for being my opponent.

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I dedicate this thesis to my nieces, my beloved godchildren, Anna and Alisa, and my nephew Akseli, the world's greatest little boy. Learning to know you and learning about life together with you brings so much joy to my life.

I hope this thesis will serve as a tool to encourage reflection and promote further studies on purpose among social services students, professionals in the field, and their clients as well.

Helsinki, 3.4.2019
Niina Manninen

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

The thesis is based on the following publications:

I Manninen, N., Kuusisto, E., & Tirri, K. (2018a). Life goals of Finnish social services students. *Journal of Moral Education 47*(2), 175–185. doi: 10.1080/03057240.2017.1415871

II Manninen, N., Kuusisto, E., & Tirri, K. (2019). Finnish social services students' perceptions of purpose and helping unknown others. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy 8*(1), 1-13: doi: 10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2019.v8.1.001.

III Manninen, N., Kuusisto, E., & Tirri, K. (2018b). What field education experiences do social services students regard as meaningful? *Sosiaalipedagoginen aikakauskirja (19)*, 43-57.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

This Ph.D. thesis explores the life purposes of Finnish social services students, particularly from the viewpoint of how helping unknown others is integrated into students' long-term life goals. The study is based on three articles. Article I describes the content of students' life goals and how students justify those goals through focus on the self and others. A balanced self and other-focused reasons for long-term life goals are indicative of those who have a purpose in life as is engagement in purposeful activities (see Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Bronk & Finch, 2010; Moran, 2009; Keys, 2011). Article II investigates students' purpose profiles and how students in different profiles perceive the role of purpose in their lives and why they want to help unknown others. Article III discusses students' meaningful field education experiences and how identification with helping as a life purpose appears in service-related learning. By definition, purpose means a higher-order life goal, one that is personally meaningful, yet includes anticipated beyond-the-self implications: genuine purpose benefits oneself as well as others (Damon et al., 2003). This social dimension of purpose separates it from the concept of meaning in life (Damon et al., 2003; Bronk, 2014) and makes it essential for studying the deeper pursuits of social services students.

Purpose in life can be perceived as a virtue (Han, 2015; Moran, 2009), especially in social services work, which is inherently moral by nature (Holmström, 2014; McBeath & Webb, 2002; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014). Having purpose helps people overcome significant adversities (Saleebey, 1996), reach their full potential (Úcar, 2013), and find meaning (Chan, 2017). In order to promote others' purposes, one has to be aware of one's own (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016; see also Tirri & Ubani, 2013; Ubani, 2013).

Having a purpose in life has been generally linked with well-being (Damon et al., 2003; Bronk, 2014) and with committed work practices (Dik, Steger, Gibson, & Peisner, 2011; see also Ponton et al., 2014). Purposelessness on the other hand has been associated with depression, self-absorption, and unstable personal relationships (Damon et al., 2003). Considering and improving one's well-being at work is one of the ethical principles of social services work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018). Having a purpose in life can safeguard this well-being. Having a sense of purpose has also been linked to better overall job satisfaction in social service work and therefore with provision of better services (Itzick, Kagan, & Ben-Ezra, 2018). Furthermore, having a primarily other-focused (purposeful) moral motivation to contribute to the development of civic environments has been associated with more committed practices than merely concentrating on self-serving motives (Malin, Tirri, & Liauw, 2015).

Social services work with clients who have experienced significant adversity is emotionally challenging (Morrison, 2007; Salo et al., 2016; Trevithick, 2014). In Finland in recent years, the mental health challenges confronted by social service professionals have been acknowledged and studied (Salo et al., 2016). It requires a strong commitment to work in a field that is relatively low in pay and is in constant flux due to changes in the societal, political, and organizational environments (Manninen, Kuusisto, & Tirri, 2018a). As has been stated,

> Social complexity has left social professionals without transcendental references. They do not embody universal values. The aura of vocation does not accompany them anymore. They do not know whether their actions will generate autonomous and free individuals (Úcar, 2013, p. 8).

Within this social complexity, which requires responding to varying complex and heterogeneous client needs (Satka, Kääriäinen, & Yliruka, 2016), purpose can help students in the discipline to make sense of their lives generally, and in particular, to make sense of their goals in a helping profession (see De Ruyter, 2002; Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971).

Understanding one's deeper pursuits and purposes are structural preconditions for self-realization (Bronk, 2014: Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009; see also Lorenz, 2008). This self-realization and self-awareness in turn is the basis for professional growth (Marlowe, Appleton, Chinnery, & Van Stratum, 2015; Urdang, 2010; Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012) and for the development of moral character in social service work (Holmström, 2014; McBeath & Webb, 2002). McBeath and Webb (2002) have even argued whether a person who does not recognize their own moral values or purposes in life should even be engaged in social service. And De Ruyter (2002, p. 41) states, "Living a life of significance in which one acts for the benefit of others and contributes to one's communities and society will increase one's opportunity to find meaning in life."

Previous research has acknowledged that service-related learning especially promotes students' pro-social purposes (Eisenberg, Eggum, & Spinrad, 2015; Koshy & Mariano, 2011; Lim 2007; Marchel, 2003) and a general orientation toward understanding others and otherness (Holm & Farber, 2005; Manninen, 2015). College and university years and early adulthood are also generally a time for purpose development (Bronk, 2014; Malin, Reilly, Quinn, & Moran, 2013). Studies in a helping profession have been linked to other-focused purposes, because students are provided concrete opportunities to act upon their beyond-the-self-intentions (Malin et al., 2013), such as in field education, for example.

With regard to research in social work, it has been stated that a better understanding of students and their values and moral dispositions should be acquired (Valutis et al., 2012). Research on the deeper pursuits and life guidelines

of students in social services and social work is somewhat lacking (Valutis et al., 2012). This study aims to shed light on this question from the perspective of a group of Finnish social services students who study at a university of applied sciences. It is important to examine what these students consider to be important in life and whether they were inherently directed to a helping profession and to determine as well the principles and goals that direct their lives and their desire to help. Based on this knowledge, we can begin to construct effective education for the purpose of what Ubani (2013) rightfully calls an existentially sensitive education.

This study addresses the idea of purpose in social work-related education in general and among Finnish social services students in particular with the intention of promoting purpose as a central construct in their education. The participants in this case study were students pursuing a bachelor's degree in social services at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The data for the study were collected during the fall semester of 2015. Articles I and II are based on 151 survey respondents' answers; Article III is based on pre- and post-field education measures involving 113 participants.

Social work-related education in Finland is available at universities of applied sciences and at traditional research universities. Degree programs leading to a bachelor's in social services have been offered at universities of applied sciences in Finland for more than twenty years (Mäkinen, Raatikainen, Rahikka, & Saarnio, 2011). Yet research on students who pursue this educational path generally appears to be sparse. In a Finnish context, a bachelor's degree in social services is a rather attractive educational choice. In the year 2018, 14,280 students applied for this three-and-a-half-year program and ranked it as their first degree option. Of these applicants, 3,060 were selected (Education Statistics Finland, 2018). The prerequisite for applying for the bachelor's degree program in social services is upper secondary education or vocational education in a social or a healthcare field (Mäkinen et al., 2011). The bachelor of social services has been a registered profession in Finland since March 1, 2016 (Act on Social Welfare Professionals 817/2015).

The main framework of social services education at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences is social pedagogy (Social Services Curriculum, 2019), a subject available to some degree in most Finnish universities of applied sciences (Semi, 2006, according to Hämäläinen & Eriksson, 2016). The emphasis in social pedagogy is on how to empower people within their communities and society by means of promoting their social and moral responsibilities (Hämäläinen, 2015), thereby bringing social pedagogy and purpose in close proximity.

This multidisciplinary thesis can be described as having a psychological basis, particularly related to personality and humanistic psychology, as well as a higher education focus on the subject of social services study. Because the thesis examines the fundamental human existential question of purpose in life (see Ubani, 2013), it

may also be of interest to religious, spiritual, moral, and values education. The ethics of care (i.e., Gilligan, 1982/2003; Skoe, 1998) is also an area close to this study. The results of this study can be taken into consideration, for example, in curriculum development for social services' professionals and in the helping professions in general. The thesis can also serve as a tool for social services educators and students to help them become more aware of purpose and become "existentially aware" professionals (see Ubani, 2013).

Epistemologically, the thesis emphasis is on the social construction of knowledge and on promoting human potential and growth to an individual's full capacity and capabilities (Dewey, 1916/1997; Freire, 1970/1996; Rogers, 1969). Also, the connection and development between theory and practice and reflection at various stages of action as a basis for learning are understood as principles of how people learn to become professionals (Dewey, 1916/1997; Freire, 1970/1996; Rogers, 1969). Socially constructed knowledge is created in conscious reflection and dialogical relationship to others and in recognizing the very conditions of our own learning (see Dewey, 1916/1997; Freire, 1970/1996; Rogers, 1969).

This summary begins by presenting the theoretical framework for the thesis: defining the purpose-in-life construct and its directions, and considering purpose in social services work and in service-related learning (Chapters 2 and 3). Then the education of social services professionals in Finland is presented both in general and also from the viewpoint of social pedagogy as a theoretical basis for the social services degree at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Chapter 4). After introducing the theoretical basis and context of the study, the research aims and methods are presented by first giving an overview of the research design, followed by the data collection procedures, instruments, and qualitative and quantitative data analyses (Chapter 5). The results of each independent article are summarized (Chapter 6), integrated (Chapter 6.4.), and discussed as a whole (Chapter 7.1). The study ends with a quality assessment, ethical considerations, and concluding remarks with recommendations for further research.

2 PURPOSE IN LIFE

2.1 Benefiting oneself and others: defining purpose

In this thesis purpose is defined as "a stable and generalized intention that is at once meaningful to the self and at the same time leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond-the-self" (Damon et al., 2003, p. 212). A purpose is perceived as a deeper reason for the immediate short-term goals and motives that drive everyday behavior (Damon 2008, p. 22; see also Bronk, 2014; Bronk & Finch, 2010; Han, 2015; Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2009). What separates the concept of purpose from the closely connected concept of meaning is the commitment to the pursuit of activities and the commitments that are pro-social by nature (Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003). Purposeful individuals are driven by long-term life goals that include a self-and-other focus (Bronk & Finch, 2010; see also Moran, 2009). Commitment, goal-directedness, and personal meaningfulness along with focus on beyond the self-concerns are central elements of purpose (Bronk 2014; Bronk & Finch, 2010; Damon, 2008; Damon et al., 2003; Han, 2015; Keys, 2011; Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2009).

Thus, by definition purpose has two aspects: psychological and social (Keys, 2011). Psychologically, purpose precedes goal directness, which very often leads to a sense of purpose; socially, purpose precedes actions and acts for social causes for the greater good: social contribution (Ryff & Keys 1998 according to Keys 2011). For purposeful individuals, purpose serves as a moral beacon directing the person's daily life and behavior (Han, 2015; Moran, 2009). Purposeful individuals are capable of using pro-social moral reasoning in justifying their goals (Moran, 2009). They see the benefits of their goals to themselves as well as how those goals benefit others (Moran, 2009). Purpose is achieved when a beyond-the-self contribution is central to how people define their life goals (Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2009).

Scientific research on the topic of purpose was practically non-existent before the 1960s. Since the beginning of the present millennium, there has been growing academic interest in the subject (Bronk, 2014). The academic reasons for studying purpose can be traced to Viktor Frankl's work on logotherapy and his experiences in a concentration camp during World War II (Bronk, 2014). In his book Man's Search for Meaning, Frankl (1959) discussed the survival of concentration camp inmates who had a clear purpose in their lives (Bronk, 2014; Frankl, 1959).

According to Frankl (1959), people who had established meaningful purpose in their lives, for example, in the form of family commitments or career-related pursuits, mentally survived the horrors of a concentration camp better than

individuals who had not found a purpose for their lives. “In the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, not the result of camp experiences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him – mentally and spiritually” (Frankl, 1959, p. 75). All psychotherapeutic attempts made in the camp had the aim of giving people inner strength by pointing out a future goal that they could look forward to (Frankl, 1959). Understanding one’s meaning in life and finding meaning even in suffering bring clarity and inner peace (Frankl, 1959).

Bronk (2014) discusses that idea from a philosophical point of view. In particular, the work of Aristotle affected early theorists in the construct of purpose. Aristotle’s concept of *eudaimonia* comes close to the construct of purpose (Bronk, 2014). To be *eudaimon* is to thrive because of opportunities for self-actualization, fulfillment, and the chance to exercise personal character strengths (Bronk, 2014). Finding purpose in life brings more enduring happiness to a person than merely concentrating on momentary happiness (Ryff, 1989). Yet for many people, the current trend in today’s world is to pursue momentary happiness and pleasures rather than seeking a deeper purpose (see De Ruyter, 2002; McMahon, 2013). Still for others, serving other people as a form of purpose can be a source of happiness (Noddings, 2003).

Multiple studies show that purpose supports psychological well-being (Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003). Finding and committing to one’s purpose supports a robust personal and professional identity formation that is the cornerstone of healthy psychological development (Damon et al., 2003; Damon 2008; see also Marttinen, 2017). The search for and pursuit of purpose are associated with the formation of a working theory; this in turn is the basis for the systematic construction of the personal self (Damon, 2008), which is naturally linked to one’s professional identity in social service work (Marlowe et al., 2015; Urdang, 2010; Valutis et al., 2012; see also Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

2.2 Common contents of purpose and representation of purpose profiles

For many people, it is during adolescence or emerging adulthood that the question of purpose becomes relevant (Bronk, 2014). At that age most people are cognitively and emotionally equipped to search for their purpose in life, while the transition to adulthood prompts many to ponder the existential questions of why am I here and what is my life purpose (Bronk, 2014). Naturally, people can find their life purpose later in life as well, but the identity formation during youth brings the question of one’s purpose to the fore (Bronk, 2014; also Damon, 2008). Although

cognitive abilities alone do not promote purpose development, which requires self-awareness (Moran, 2009), and this is not self-evident to everyone (Woodward & Mackay, 2012). For example, many young people are not aware of their values in life; even if they may be aware of them, enacting these values is not manifested (Woodward & Mackay, 2012).

Development of purpose is neither linear nor deterministic (Malin et al., 2013). There are many shifts and changes in adolescents' life circumstances and in their relationships with family and peers that affect development (Malin et al., 2013). The role of context and the relationship of the person and his context are of great importance for the development of purpose (Malin et al., 2013; see also Rogoff, 2003). Interaction between individuals within varied contexts is important to developing purposeful intentions, such as higher-order goals (Malin et al., 2013). These intentions must be actualized in order to develop a purpose (Malin et al., 2013; also De Ruyter, 2002). Life goals and purposes may also change over time (Malin et al., 2013).

Adolescents and emerging adults typically consider their professional plans (such as finding a personally meaningful job), their religious or political beliefs, and familial concerns, such as the type of romantic partner they hope to find (Bronk, 2014). It is typical of youth to consider the personally meaningful goals that they hope to accomplish (Bronk, 2014). According to classic developmental theories such as Erikson's (1959), youth is the time to establish a coherent identity and ponder the purpose of life as well as to resolve the developmental task of intimacy vs. isolation, for example (Miller, 2002). Bronk (2014) proposes that the development of identity and the related search for purpose span adolescence and emerging adulthood; these two activities can therefore be regarded as similar stages in purpose development (see also Marttinen, 2017).

According to Damon et al. (2003), Prager (1996, 1998) concludes that people of all ages agree that personal relationships, personal growth, meeting basic needs, participation in leisure activities, and the preservation of values and ideals are common sources of personal meaning. De Vogler and Ebersole (1981) also came to the conclusion that relationships were the most frequently mentioned categories across age groups when people's meaning structures were categorized (Damon et al., 2003). Endeavoring to find meaning in life in relationships, in work, and in hobbies may seem rather commonplace (De Ruyter, 2002). It is also noteworthy that students who scored low on the Purpose in Life test (PIL) are likely to have more investment in hedonistic values, such as personal pleasure, excitement, and comfort, as well as happiness, mature love, and freedom (Crandall & Rasmussen 1975, according to Damon et al., 2003). A sense of meaninglessness is also typical of modern Western societies (Schinkel, De Ruyter, & Aviram, 2016).

Heretofore, purpose studies have mostly concentrated on defining youth purposes because the search for purpose is often heightened during that time of

life (see Bronk, 2014). Youth purpose studies in the context of the United States (Bronk, 2014; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009) have shown that young people have a tendency to be rather self-focused in their goals and mostly to consider the people closest to them in these goals, meaning family and friends rather than other people in general. This trend also appears to be descriptive of Finnish youth in general (Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016). Surprisingly, it describes as well Iranian youth to whom collectivist, other-focused values are being taught (Hedayati, Kuusisto, Gholami, & Tirri, 2017). It has furthermore been found that young people in the U.S. (Damon, 2008) and in Finland are not usually interested in politics, even though in Finland young people generally say that they want somehow to help other people directly (see Helve, 2015; Myllyniemi, 2016). Nevertheless, this lack of interest in politics and societal influence may pose a threat to democratic societies (Damon, 2008).

In youth purpose studies, young people have often been found to represent precursor forms of purpose rather than genuine purpose (Malin et al., 2013). According to Damon (2008), roughly 20 percent of adolescents in his research demonstrated a purpose in life. In Bronk, Finch, and Talib's (2010) study, they found that 34 percent of high-ability late adolescents represented purpose, 19 percent of adolescents represented beyond-the-self-dreams, 16 percent of adolescents represented self-oriented life goals, and 31 percent were drifting. Most of the young people, roughly 55 percent, can be categorized in one of two groups – those with self-oriented life goals and those who are Dreamers (Damon 2008; see also Bronk 2014).

It has been further stated that people who consider only themselves and the personal meaningfulness of their own goals can be regarded as self-oriented life goal pursuers (Moran, 2009). Disengaged individuals (Damon, 2008) appear detached, and some of them confine their interest to hedonistic, self-oriented pursuits. Also depending on the ability to justify their goals through pro-social benefits, students can be regarded as either Purposeful or Dabblers (Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009). Dabblers show engagement in pro-social activities, but they are not capable of providing pro-social justifications for their actions (Moran, 2009). They show engagement in potentially purposeful pursuits, yet they keep searching for new purposes in life (Damon, 2008; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016). Those students who show purpose are capable of pro-social moral reasoning about their goals (Moran, 2009). They define their goals through personal meaningfulness and the benefit to others (Moran, 2009; also Bronk & Finch, 2010). Dreamers might have high ideals in relation to pro-social goals, but they are usually not actively involved in realizing these goals (Damon, 2008). A study by Tirri and Kuusisto (2016) showed that, in the context of Finnish teacher education, most student teachers appeared to be Dabblers.

According to the Finnish Business and Policy Forum's (2005) value bank, women in early adulthood considered the main factors in their happiness to be related to family and good relations within a family, along with friendships and good relations in general as well as loving and being loved. Further according to the value bank (Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2005), an interesting job was valued as an important aspect of happiness by approximately half of the women in early adulthood. In general, an interesting job was considered more important than economic prosperity or economic goals. Influencing societal matters was also considered relatively important in that data. The sample in the current study is also representative of women in early adulthood. Generally in Finland, Anglo-European cultural values seem to be of relevance with a focus on individualism, one's closest relationships and communities, and values transmitted through formal schooling and nuclear family-oriented parenting (see Rogoff, 2003). In a recent study (2018) to determine what Finnish people consider sacred and inviolable, family values, close relationships, and love were described as the most sacred matters; approximately one-third of the participants considered helping others and societal influence as being sacred (Pessi, Pitkänen, Westinen, & Grönlund, 2018).

Overall, it can be said that having a genuine purpose in life requires balanced justifications between a focus on oneself and a focus on others while considering one's personal deeper, long-term goals in life (Bronk 2014; Bronk & Finch, 2010; Damon, 2008; Damon et al., 2003; Han, 2015; Keys, 2011; Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2009). Yet focus on the self is a common tendency in the West (see Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Bronk, 2014; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009) and many people in this individualistic and materialistic world (i.e., Salonen & Joutsenvirta, 2018) lack a deeper meaning and seek it (Schinkel, De Ruyter, & Aviram, 2016). Only a minority of people exhibit purpose with a pro-social orientation to the world (Bronk & Finch, 2010; Bronk, Finch, & Talib, 2010; Damon, 2008; Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2009). Aiming to find purpose in the form of family and close relations seems to be a common trend (see Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; DeRuyter, 2002; Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2005; Moran, 2009; Pessi et al., 2018; Rogoff, 2003). Whatever one's purpose in life may be, finding it is humanly and existentially important (i.e., Frankl, 1959) and supports individuals' and society's well-being (Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; Marttinen, 2017).

3 PURPOSE IN SOCIAL SERVICES WORK AND DEVELOPMENT OF PURPOSE IN SERVICE

3.1 Purpose in social services work

In the United States and the United Kingdom, social work-related education has been criticized as being dominated by cognitive-behavioral and evidence-based approaches rather than efforts to identify feelings or deeper purposes in one's personal orientation (Trevithick, 2014; Urdang 2010). Students need guidance in order to become aware of how their attitudes and life purposes are central to helping their future clients (Barlow & Hall, 2007; Urdang, 2010). For social service encounters, students need to develop a stable professional self that is based on self-awareness (Urdang, 2010; see also Marlowe et al., 2015; Valutis et al., 2012). Self-awareness is also a key to developing purposeful commitments as long-term life goals (Moran, 2009; also Schinkel et al., 2016). Integration of one's personal and professional selves has been linked to a better ability to engage in professional encounters by comparison with those who exhibit separation of these identities (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Purpose within social services work can be understood as a moral guideline and a virtue to be inculcated and developed over time (see Han, 2015; Moran, 2009). For this reason, in the present thesis it is supposed that these higher-order life goals and purposes impact how social services students commit to their helping profession and how satisfied they are with the profession (see Dik et al., 2011; Itzick et al., 2018). For example, having a "calling" to pro-social work (work benefiting others) has been associated with more committed and satisfied work practices than not having this calling (Ponton et al., 2014)

McBeath and Webb (2002) have been especially critical of social workers' moral sense. The authors perceive that the basic question in social work should primarily be about what makes a good social worker rather than what defines good social work. The goodness of action in social work lies in the perspective on social workers' capacity to understand moral appraisals and their own motivations and dispositions in executing their work and the aims for their actions (McBeath & Webb, 2002). When a client is seen as a duty rather than a person for whose genuine good one is acting, it breaks the reflexive relation of recognizing the humanity in the actions and what is considered to be representations of a good life (McBeath & Webb, 2002; also Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). According to McBeath and Webb (2002), this task-centeredness and managerial approach to social work (see also Holmström, 2014; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014) promotes the self-other asymmetry in professional encounters. Having a purpose that is pro-social by nature requires

that one understands the implications for others of one's activities in their behalf (Moran, 2009). A social worker must therefore be capable of understanding other people's perspectives. This in turn often requires that one be exposed to different cultures and worldviews in order to understand one's own purposes and worldview (Rogoff, 2003).

The personal life goals or purposes of students in social service and social work have not been studied before. Rather than approaching this topic from the purpose point of view, previous research has mainly concentrated on students' explicit motives for entering the field (Liedgren & Elvhage, 2015; Knezievik & Ovsenik, 2015; Ngai & Cheung, 2009; Toros & Medar, 2015). Research has shown that students entering social work programs have both personal and social aspirations (Liedgren & Elvhage, 2015; Knezievik & Ovsenik, 2015; Ngai & Cheung, 2009; Toros & Medar, 2015). Furthermore, according to the research, social work students want to remedy the injustices in the world, yet they also want to pursue their personal development goals. Nevertheless, social work students are often portrayed as having altruistic, pro-social concerns for other people (Knezievik & Ovsenik, 2015). According to Knezievik and Ovsenik (2015), social work students who were committed to the subject's altruistic core values succeeded better in their university programs than those who did not identify with these values. An altruistic orientation (that is, one benefiting others without any expected personal gain; see Batson et al., 1999) has also been linked to better job satisfaction and lessened emotional exhaustion in social work (Ngai & Cheung, 2009). In a Finnish study of what motivated students to enter the field of social work, it was found that their ultimate goal was to help other people (Hackett, Kuronen, Matthies, & Kresal, 2003). However, it seems that that there are fewer studies on why exactly the students want to help others, as helping can be based on many reason, such as self-serving motives, genuine concern for others, or mixed motives (Roeser et al., 2014).

Social service work is challenging in many ways (Salo et al., 2016). Professionals in the field deal with the complex needs of different individuals (Satka et al., 2016) and also with political and societal demands that keep changing (i.e., Health and social services reform, 2017). The work is also relatively low paid, and in Finland, due to decreased economic resources, there is also pressure to restructure the social and health care fields (Health and Social Services Reform, 2017), which may mean that professionals will be working with increasingly limited resources in the future (Manninen et al., 2018a). One has to have a strong commitment to social service in these uncertain conditions (Manninen et al., 2018a).Social work professionals with a sense of purpose have been found to provide their clients better service, because they are more committed to their work; moreover, purpose serves as a buffer against emotional exhaustion (Itzick et al., 2018; also Ngai & Cheung, 2009). Social workers in Finland have been found to have twice the mental health-related challenges than, for example, kindergarten teachers and psychologists (Salo et al.,

2016). Reflecting on and improving one's well-being at work is considered one of the ethical principles of social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018). Purposeful people have generally been found to enjoy more well-being than others (Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; Frankl, 1959), whereas self-focused individuals more often have diffuse identity profiles and experiences of depression, for example (Marttinen, 2017).

Professional helpers use deliberate and specific strategies to address their clients' varying needs and help them cope in challenging life situations (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971). Social service professionals should be able to promote the purpose development of their clients (Chan, 2017). To do so, the professionals themselves should become aware of their values and purposes (see Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016; also Tirri & Ubani, 2013). This self-awareness is a basis for their professional development and interaction (Marlowe et al., 2015; Urdang 2010; Rodgers & Raider-Roth 2006) when considering the context of emotionally challenging relationship-based work (Barlow & Hall, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014). Social workers should be able to see how their own cultural practices, values, and purposes influence their clients' cultural practices with varying individual representations (Holmström, 2014; McBeath & Webb, 2002; Rogoff, 2003).

So, for example, promoting self-awareness as a prerequisite to purposeful social service would seem central to the education of future professionals (see Barlow & Hall, 2007; Marlowe et al., 2015; Moran, 2009; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Schinkel et al., 2016; Trevithick, 2014; Urdang, 2010; Valutis et al., 2012). Purposeful orientation in social services work with an understanding both of its personal and social meaningfulness may bring commitment, satisfaction, and well-being at work (see Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; Dik et al., 2011; Itzick et al., 2018; Ngai & Cheung, 2009; Ponton et al., 2014). In effect, social service work is moral and should be based on the similarities between people and on recognizing the humanity in every action taken rather than serving clients on a managerial basis (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; McBeath & Webb, 2002; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014).

3.2 Learning in service as a platform for purpose development

A great deal of purpose development is linked to activities that are social by nature and connect persons to the wider community and promote participation (Molasso, 2006; also Eisenberg et al., 2015; Koshy & Mariano, 2011; Lim 2007; Marchel, 2003). Social interaction and activity are also generally central to pro-social activities (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen 1988). The core definition of purpose emphasizes the social aspects of life (Molasso, 2006). It has been claimed that

service-related learning serves as a forum in which the promotion of purposes can be fostered (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Koshy & Mariano, 2011; Lim, 2007). Altruistic purpose, meaning serving others without expectation of personal benefit (Batson et al., 1999), has been linked to service learning (Marchel, 2003).

The challenge in service-related learning is that a wide array of different types of experiential educational programs are described as service learning, although there are special characteristics that need to be taken into consideration (Furgo, 1996). Volunteerism, community service, internships, field education, and service learning each have distinctive characteristics, even though they all move along a continuum from emphasis on service and service beneficiaries to emphasis on the individual student's learning (Furgo, 1996). In the field education of social services students as service-related learning, the emphasis is on the individual student's learning more than on developing a particular service for the collaboratively identified needs of the recipients, which is more common in genuine service learning programs (see Furgo, 1996; Phillips, 2007).

At the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (see Social Services Curriculum, 2019), social services students take part in three field education programs that last from four to twelve weeks, depending on a student's year of study. In their field education, students are assigned a professional (the field supervisor) as well as a teacher in social service. The field education environments can be a student's future employment area, such as working as a social counselor in child protection institutes or supported housing for people with mental health and substance abuse challenges. Many of the students choose to work in early childhood education, and they practice their future work in kindergartens. The goals of the field education programs are set forth in the social services curriculum (2019), and they mostly endeavor to identify and apply social pedagogical means in supporting individuals and communities (Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

At its best, learning in service can provide students with a true sense of community, the feeling of an intersubjective world in which they can strive to achieve an authentic balance between care of the self and care of others (see Tirri & Quinn, 2010). Community sensing is an elementary aspect of purpose; it means sharing time with others, experiencing the community, and engaging in other forms of communal spiritual experience (Tirri, Nokelainen, & Ubani, 2006 in Tirri & Quinn, 2010). A good deal of learning in experiential education programs also includes either passively or interactionally observing encounters between people (Urdang, 2010).

In addition to community sensing (Tirri & Quinn, 2010) to promote the development of students' purposes, special emphasis should be paid to help them understand their intrinsic motivations and values in pro-social activities (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Jongho, Myung-Seop, Hyeyoung, & Byung-Yoon, 2018), thereby generally promoting their reflection skills (Marlowe et al., 2015; Urdang,

2010; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006) and helping them to identify and reflect on feelings (Barlow & Hall, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014). Providing informative feedback is a vital element in promoting students' purpose development in service-related learning (Jongho et al., 2018; Moran, 2017).

In service-related learning, it is important to overcome cultural differences in sympathetic ways and transfer one's local frames of meaning to include new perspectives (Holm & Farber, 2005). Learning in service can be a framework for meeting people whose culture, individual lifestyle, and preferences, for example, are different from one's own (Holm & Farber, 2005; also Manninen, 2015). Addressing this otherness and distinct values can help students become aware of their own values, lifestyles, and life goals (Rogoff, 2003) and thus further their purpose development. Traditional service learning (see Furgo, 1996) in contrast to other forms of experiential education may be especially influential, due to its intensity and collaborative nature: "service users" and "service providers" are on equal footing in negotiating the goals and meanings of the service rather than having learning goals handed down from above and structured to fit the existing professional forms of helping that may be more indicative of traditional types of field education. Based on the author's previous study (2015), it appears that building a trusting and dialogical relationship with service users seemed to be procedural and may require continuous and supervised reflection on the interaction with service users over a longer period of time, such as in year-long service learning programs (Manninen, 2015).

To conclude, social interactivity is central to developing students' pro-social and purposeful commitments (see Eisenberg et al., 2015; Koshy & Mariano, 2011; Lim 2007; Molasso, 2006; Watson et al., 1988) such as in service-related learning (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Jongho et al., 2018; Koshy & Mariano 2011; Lim 2007; Moran, 2017). However, the service should be reflected on at a deeper level in order to promote purpose and from the point of view of one's intrinsic motivations and values for service and helping others (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Jongho et al., 2018). Identifying and clarifying different aspects in a sense of community (Tirri & Quinn, 2010) seem important as do identifying and reflecting on feelings (Barlow & Hall, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014). Informative feedback in service and about the service is likewise important (Jongho et al., 2018; Moran, 2017).

4 EDUCATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS IN FINLAND

4.1 Bachelor of social services education

In Finland, education in the field of social work is offered at universities of applied sciences and traditional research universities. Students can earn the bachelor's and the master's degree in social services at universities of applied sciences, and can earn the bachelor's and the master's in social work at traditional research universities. A bachelor's degree of social services education has been offered for more than twenty years in Finland (Mäkinen et al., 2011). It takes approximately three and a half years of full-time study and requires earning 210 credits. The prerequisite education for this degree is either general upper secondary education or vocational education in the social or healthcare fields (Mäkinen et al., 2011).

Twenty different universities of applied sciences in Finland offer a bachelor's degree in social services. In 2018, of the 14,280 applicants who rated social services education as their first choice of study, the number admitted to this degree program was approximately 3,060 (Education Statistics Finland, 2018). By comparison, only a few hundred undergraduate students enrolled in social work programs in traditional research universities in 2018 (Education Statistics Finland, 2018).

At Metropolia, the institution which provides the context for this research, the social services program belongs to the Well-being unit along with Occupational Therapy and Elder Care. As the largest university of applied sciences in Finland, Metropolia offers degrees at the bachelor's and master's levels in several units, such as Media, Design and Conservation; ICT and Industrial Management; and Health. The units closest to Well-being are Health and Rehabilitation, for example, where nurses, midwives, emergency care personnel and physiotherapists are trained (Metropolia, Management and Organisation, n.d.).

Among the fields of study, social, health and sports was the most popular. Overall, 8,508 applicants applied to one of the degrees in this field at Metropolia in 2018 (Education Statistics Finland, 2018). Of all degrees in this field, physiotherapy was the most popular, with 1,001 students applying for full-time study. Next in popularity was a bachelor of social services program with 976 applicants, and occupational therapy was the third favorite with 633 applicants (Educational Statistics Finland, 2018). In 2018, there were 178 applicants (with Metropolia as the preferred institution) to the Elder care program, of which 50 students were selected (28%); 739 applied for Occupational Therapy with 75 students selected (10%), and social services had 1,343 applicants with 168 selected (12.5%) (see Education Statistics Finland, 2018).

Social services has been a registered profession in Finland since March 1, 2016 (Act on Social Welfare Professionals, 817/2015). Graduates with this degree are qualified to become professionals in social education work: helping and supporting people of different ages through social counseling and advocacy (Mäkinen et al., 2011). The majority of the social services students support their clients' daily lives and serve in various areas from child protection to elder care (Mäkinen et al., 2011; Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017). The social services degree programs offer competencies in working with various user group as a generic orientation to social and educational work (Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017). In addition, students can also choose to specialize in particular groups, for example, through their choice of field education, final thesis topic, and elective courses or specializations, which are offered in some universities of applied sciences (Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017). In 2016, most social services degrees that were obtained included specializations in child, youth, and family work, including child protection (997 degrees with this specialization); early education (753); working with adults (714), and working with mental health and substance abuse (335), working with the disabled (96), working with the elderly (70) and working in multicultural social services settings (36) (Survey of Universities of Applied Sciences, 2017, presented in Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017).

Those who hold a bachelor's degree in social services are qualified to work as kindergarten teachers if their education includes at least 60 credits of social pedagogy or early childhood-related study (Degree on Social Welfare Professionals' Qualifications A608/2005) and if they graduate by July 31, 2023 (Act on Early Education 540/2018). According to these new qualification requirements, students who graduate after that will qualify for a bachelor's degree in social services in early education and their education will not include the kindergarten teacher qualification anymore (Act on Early Education 540/2018). Recently, approximately 700 to 800 students (approximately 30 percent of those enrolled) have acquired kindergarten teacher qualification as part of their bachelor of social services study program (Karila, Kosonen, & Järvenkallas, 2017; Education Statistics Finland, 2018). Social services students at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences can choose a study path that concentrates either on early childhood education or on a general social pedagogical path (Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

Those with a bachelor's degree in social services often work in areas similar to social workers who have studied in traditional research universities, but their duties are often more practical – "hands-on social work" – compared to the jobs of social workers, which are often managerial in nature (Talentia, n.d.). Professional titles for social services professionals are, for example, kindergarten teachers, instructors at children's homes and supported housing units, as well as rehabilitation instructors

and family workers (Talentia, n.d.). Social services professionals consistently have high employment rates in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2017).

The bachelor's degree in social services is based on the following competence areas:

1. Ethical competence in social services
2. Communication and interaction competence
3. Counseling and guidance competence
4. Participatory and critical societal competence
5. Research and development competence
6. Work community and leadership competence

(Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

These competence areas are based on the viewpoints of social services educators (Rouhiainen-Valo, Rantanen, Hovi-Pulsa, & Tietäväinen, 2010) and have been approved by the national level Social Services Educators' Professional Network, most recently on April 29, 2016 (Sosiaalialan ammattikorkeakouluverkosto, 2016). These areas are being implemented in different universities of applied sciences (Rouhiainen-Valo et al., 2010). In the social services degree at Metropolia, these competences are developed through various theoretical courses and are also applied in the social services work in field education (Social Services Curriculum, 2019). The research and development competence is realized in the final thesis process (Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

In Finland, the degree in social services as a whole is multidisciplinary, because it is based on social and educational sciences (Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017). Each university of applied sciences and their social services personnel have the autonomy to decide the curriculum content (Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017). The majority of personnel hold a master's degree, either in social work (represented by about one-third), social policy, psychology, or one of the educational sciences such as social pedagogy (about one-tenth), according to a survey of social services degrees in universities of applied sciences in 2017 reported by Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto (2017). Based on this same documentation, 18,5 percent of the social services personnel held a doctoral degree in a relevant field in 2017. As for the teaching staffs in universities of applied sciences, most lecturers also have relevant practical field work experience (Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto, 2017).

The differences between a bachelor's degree in social services and social work education at traditional research universities have been addressed by Lähteinen and Tuohino (2013). They concluded that a bachelor's degree in social services education is more practice-oriented than the research-based social work education offered at traditional universities. They stress that the connection to working life

is emphasized more in the bachelor of social services education, since it includes several field education periods. At Metropolia, the social services curriculum includes approximately 30 weeks of practical training (Social Services Curriculum, 2019). The practice orientation of social services education is perceived as a strength in comparison with social work education at research universities, which is more theoretically oriented (Lähteinen & Tuohino, 2013, p. 52). However, this practice orientation and pervasiveness can lead to cursoriness and fragmentation in the bachelor's in social services education in contrast to the research-based social work education (Lähteinen & Tuohino, 2013).

The Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, where the research data used here were collected, is the largest university of applied sciences in Finland (Metropolia in Brief, n.d.). It offers education for different professions in Finland's capital region. The total number of students at Metropolia is approximately 16,500, and the number of personnel is approximately 1,000 (Metropolia in Brief, n.d.). Last year (2018) 1,343 applicants chose Metropolia's social services degree as their first option, and 168 were selected for admission. Of those admitted, most enrolled in the Finnish-speaking full-time study program, and about 25 enrolled in the Finnish-speaking part-time study program with an equal number in the English-speaking program (Education Statistics Finland, 2018). The curriculum for all the groups is the same (Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

4.2 Social pedagogy as a context for the study of social services

Social pedagogy is considered a main theoretical framework for the study of social services at Metropolia (Social Services Curriculum, 2019). To some extent the subject can be studied in almost all social services programs in Finland (Semi, 2006, according to Hämäläinen & Eriksson, 2016). The aim of social services study at Metropolia is that persons who earn a bachelor's [degree] in social services are capable of analyzing social phenomena and understanding their significance to people's lives and well-being. Combining pedagogical (education and learning) and social (societal) perspectives at work is emphasized in social pedagogy (Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

Thus, in social pedagogical thinking, social and pedagogical standpoints are intertwined, and on this basis various types of help are arranged (Hämäläinen, 2003). Social pedagogy stresses the importance of community to the well-being of individuals (Hämäläinen, 2003, 2012, 2015).

Social pedagogy aims to promote people's social functioning, participation, social identity, and social competence as members of society (Storø, 2013). Úcar (2013) contrasts traditional pedagogy with social pedagogy and concludes that

social pedagogy considers a person as whole and in relation to other people without separating knowledge, feelings, and actions. He views relationships in people's everyday lives as being both the contexts and the content of social pedagogical activities. Social pedagogy stresses compassionate relationship-based practices (Stephens, 2013). Thus, social pedagogy emphasizes social constructivist learning and socio-cultural and cultural-historical aspects of human learning and development (see Plowright, 2011; Rogoff, 2003).

Social pedagogy is common in the Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe (Eriksson, 2014), but country-specific traditions have developed within certain cultural, historical, and socio-political contexts (Hämäläinen, 2015; Lorenz, 2008). Furthermore, the understanding of social pedagogy's relationship to social work varies in different traditions and countries (Hämäläinen, 2015; Eriksson, 2014; Úcar, 2013). The concept of Bildung (which originated in Germany), which includes upbringing and empowerment and community, are central to the way social pedagogy is perceived in the Nordic countries (Eriksson, 2014). In Finland, social pedagogy is seen as being distinct from social work (Hämäläinen, 2015), a view that applies to most other European countries as well (Eriksson, 2014). Hamburger (2001, 2003) in Lorenz (2008) distinguishes social pedagogy from social work as not primarily "deficit-oriented," but rather as regarding all humans as capable of reaching their full potential with social educational guidance (see also Storø, 2013). Social pedagogy addresses values that are subject- and resource-oriented and that enhance inclusion and equality between people (Storø, 2013).

Hämäläinen (2015) discusses social pedagogy as dealing with the fundamental questions of what is human and what people's relationships with their society should be. He goes on to say that social pedagogy integrates and juxtaposes the theories of individualism and communality: people should be able to demonstrate social and moral responsibilities while pursuing their individual interests as members of society (Hämäläinen, 2015; also Storø, 2013). Even with these communal ideals and values in social pedagogy, there are strands that emphasize individualistic means in furthering people's societal inclusion; in the Nordic countries there has been a trend to move towards these aims instead of using societal, community-oriented approaches (Eriksson, 2014). Whatever means of social pedagogical interventions are used, it is clear that purpose as Damon et al. (2003) define it could be an integral concept. Genuine purposes benefit other people and the community and link members of a community through pro-social orientation (Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009). In the present study, developing the purposes of social services students and those of people in general is understood as a means to attain social pedagogical empowerment and community goals.

5 RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

5.1 Aim of the thesis

This exploratory, mixed-methods case study aims to identify the life goals and life purposes of Finnish social services students at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The study also examines their purpose profiles and how the role of purpose is perceived in their lives as well as the extent and justifications given by students for their goals in helping unknown others. It also investigates the students' meaningful field education experiences within the context of purpose. As a whole, the study aims to determine how students exhibit self- and other-focused pursuits in their lives and in their profiles and learning. The study is based on three peer-reviewed journal articles that posed the following research questions:

> What kinds of life goals do Finnish social services students identify with and how do they justify their goals? (Article I)
>
> What purpose profiles do Finnish social services students exhibit and how do students in different profiles perceive the role of purpose and helping? (Article II)
>
> What kinds of field education experiences do Finnish social services students regard as meaningful, and how does field education influence students' sense of purpose and helping orientation? (Article III)

5.2 Overview of the research design

The thesis utilizes a mixed-methods research design (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The scope of the study as a whole is novel because the life purposes of Finnish social services students have not been studied before. Therefore, the nature of the study is exploratory rather than explanatory or confirmatory (see Gerring, 2011). As a case study, the thesis concentrates on an intensive investigation of the life purposes of students enrolled in social services program at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

The thesis can be described as having a convergent parallel, mixed-methods design (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This means concurrent use of quantitative and qualitative data with the data analyses performed simultaneously (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The level of interaction between the qualitative and

quantitative aspects is independent, and mixing takes place at the interpretation stage (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2011). A mixed-methods design has been chosen in order to triangulate the findings for possible mutual corroboration, completeness of the study, explanation, and credibility (see Bryman 2006, according to Creswell & Plano Clark 2011, p. 62). The study design can also be described as an emergent mixed-methods design since, at the beginning of the research, it was discovered that the quantitative approach alone was not sufficient to explain the complexities of the students' purposes and their purpose profiles or meaningful field education experiences. Equal priority is given to both strands (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2011).

The survey data gathered for the study included both fixed and open questions (see Moran, 2014a). A total of 151 students answered the first semester's Start survey, which was used as a basis for the analysis presented in Articles I and II. For both the semester's start survey and the end survey (the post-field education survey), 113 answers were received and analyzed (Article III).

In this study both deductive and inductive content analyses were used, with descriptive statistics presented in side-by-side comparisons with open answers. To determine the purpose profiles, an explorative factor analysis was performed together with a cluster analysis and a one-way ANOVA with post-hoc tests. For pre- and post-field education measures, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to test the differences (Article III). This test was chosen, because the differences were not normally distributed on the scales that were used in the study according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The calculation on effect sizes for the test was based on the following: dividing the value of observation in standard deviation units by the square root of 226 as a number of all observations (Field, 2012 in Manninen et al., 2018b). Cohen's criterion (1992) was used to estimate the effect sizes. Please see table 1 for an overview of the research design.

Table 1. Overview of the research design, data collection, and analysis

Research question and design	Instruments	Participants	Data analysis
What kinds of life goals do Finnish social services students identify with and how do they justify their goals? (Article I) Convergent parallel mixed-methods design	Moran's (2014a) semester start survey: -Robert & Robins's (2000) Life Goals Questionnaire -Magen's (1998) Life Aspirations Questionnaire	Selective sampling (N=151) of social services students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	Descriptive statistics Deductive and inductive content analysis and
What purpose profiles do Finnish social services students exhibit and how do students in different profiles perceive the role of purpose and helping? (Article II) Convergent parallel mixed-methods design	Moran's (2014a) semester start survey: -Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler's (2006) Meaning of Life Questionnaire -Moran's (2014b) Purpose Characteristics Questionnaire -Magen's (1998) Life Aspirations Questionnaire	Selective sampling (N=151) of social services students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	Inductive content analysis, explorative factor analysis, descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlations, cluster analysis, one-way ANOVA with post hoc tests
What kinds of field education experiences do Finnish social services students regard as meaningful, and how does field education influence students' sense of purpose and helping orientation? (Article III) Convergent parallel mixed-methods design	Moran's (2014a) semester start and end survey: -Steger et al., (2006) Meaning of Life Questionnaire -Moran's (2014a) service-learning questionnaire (adapted from Morton's (1995) Service Preference Questionnaire) - Moran & Mariano (2013) How service learning influences youth purpose around the world, student survey	Selective sampling of social services students (N=113) at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (students who answered both *start* and an *end* survey)	Inductive and deductive content analysis, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test with calculation of effect sizes

5.3 Survey procedure

The surveys used in the study were compiled by Moran (2014a). The same surveys have also been used in other contexts in Finland (Bundick & Tirri, 2014; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016). The original language of the purpose surveys was English; translations of these surveys into Finnish were used in this study. The sampling was selective: students who were taking part in field education during the semester the data were collected were chosen. The students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences who took part in the study were asked to fill out three different purpose- and field education-related surveys. The students who participated in field education during the fall semester of 2015 answered the surveys. The answers (N=151) for the first survey are analyzed in Articles I and II, and the semester start

and end survey answers (N=113) give by the same students are discussed in Article III (pre-field education and post-field education measures).

Permission to perform the study and collect the survey data was received from the management at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Because the author was involved in coordinating the field education for social services students during the fall term of 2015, she had access to those students' contact information from which the data were collected.

The surveys were tested in the beginning of the fall semester 2015, and some minor changes were made with regard to the order of the questions. Some changes were also made to the translations in order to make the surveys more understandable to social services students. The surveys were managed using a Qualtrics program.

Information about the research was provided to the students who were involved in field education and were research participants. This information was provided via e-mail, as well as during the classes in which the surveys were conducted and in the actual surveys. It was explained that by answering the surveys, the students were taking part in a research project, and anonymity in handling their responses was guaranteed. In addition, the purpose of the research was explained.

For the majority of the student participants (n=111, 70%), responding to the surveys was arranged during their sessions in field education, while reflections were communicated during class time at the university. For example, the main themes of the survey were explained to the English-speaking group (n=20), who answered the survey in Finnish. The Finnish-language survey was chosen for the English-speaking group for comparability (the same survey answered by every group with the same order of questions, etc.) and because only n=12 of the total number of respondents spoke a language other than Finnish. Naturally, the language issue might have affected how these students understood and interpreted the questions, even though the author was present during the survey to offer language support.

One hour was reserved to answer the semester start and end survey for those students who participated in field education reflection meetings at the university. Both iPad and computer classrooms were reserved in order to make taking the survey as easy as possible and also guaranteeing that each student had a computer with which to respond to the questions. Most of the respondents answered the survey on their mobile phones. If the students had completed the survey on their own time, on their own initiative, the response rate (95%) would have been significantly smaller. It was possible to explain the research more in detail to the students who completed either their first or second field education experience and motivate them to answer the surveys. When students answered the surveys during their university classes, snacks were offered. A few movie tickets were raffled off to students who were unable to answer the surveys during the university classes

because they were off campus (n= 48, 30%); they participated in their final field education according to their own schedules.

5.4 Participants

One hundred fifty-one students answered the semester start survey (Moran, 2014a). Respondents to the survey according to year of study were 1st (n=41, 27%), 2nd (n=49, 33%), 3rd (In=38, 25%), and final year (n= 23, 15%) students. Eight percent (n=12) of the respondents were immigrants in Finland, and 92 percent were non-immigrants. The majority of the respondents were female (94 percent), which is representative of the social services field as a whole (Liedgren & Elvhage, 2015). The mean age of the survey respondents was 28 (SD=7.03).

According to the answers to the semester start survey (N=151), the majority of the students were following the general social pedagogical path, with n=21 enrolled in early education with the goal of becoming a kindergarten teacher. When the students were asked what field or career they intended to follow after graduation, the majority (n=53) mentioned the social services field in general, n=22 specified early education, n=13 indicated child protection, and n= 7 mentioned social counseling or counseling. In addition, many special fields of social services work, such as working with substance abusers, were mentioned a few times. Eleven students mentioned that they did not know the area or the career they wanted to pursue, and approximately ten students mentioned a specific field such as supplying aid to developing countries, crisis work, entrepreneurship in the social services field, teaching, working with sex workers, and psychotherapy.

For the semester start and end surveys (N=113) (Moran, 2014a), the students who answered both participated in the field education that followed. In the four-week-long field education, there were n=31 (first-year students); in the eight-week field education, there were n= 52 (second- or third-year students); and in the twelve-week program, n=30 (final year students). Due to the disproportion in the respondents' year groups and the small overall sample, comparisons between different year groups were not made in this study. The response rate for the semester end survey was 75 percent. "The mean age of the respondents was 27 years (SD = 6.77, min = 20 years, max = 52). The majority of the participants were women, with only eight percent being men. 8.8 percent (N=10) were with immigrant background in Finland and 91.2 percent (N=103) with non-immigrant background" (Manninen et al., 2018b, p. 47).

5.5 Instruments

To measure the life goal content of social services students, Robert and Robins's (2000) Life Goals Questionnaire was used (Article I). The instrument contains 20 items, which were factored into seven major life goals: relationship (α = .618), hedonistic (α = .621), social (α = .640), economic (α = .737), religious (α = .728), political (α = .529), and aesthetic (α = .791). The items within Robert and Robins's (2000) instrument were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale based on the question, How important are the following goals in your life using the rating 1 = not important to me to 5 = very important to me? For example, the measure on social life goals included such items as volunteering in the community and helping others in need. Political life goals on the other hand included being influential in public affairs and becoming a community leader. As an example, the measure of hedonistic life goals included having new and different experiences, having an exciting lifestyle, and having fun.

On the basis of previous research (Damon, 2008), hedonistic and economic goals were defined as self-focused. Relationships, social life goals, aesthetics (arts-related), political influence, and religious goals were defined as showing some anticipated beyond-the-self implications and were therefore categorized as other-focused (Damon, 2008, pp. 52-53; see also Bundick & Tirri, 2014; Moran, 2015).

The sense and presence of purpose among the social services students were measured with Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler's (2006) Meaning of Life Questionnaire with items that were factored into one of two dimensions: the search for purpose (α=.89) (including five items) and the presence of purpose (α=84) (including five items). The items were answered on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = absolutely untrue to 7 = absolutely true). As explained in Manninen et al. (2018b, pp. 48-49),

> The scale on *search for purpose* included the items: I am searching for meaning in my life; I am looking to find my life's purpose; I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful; I am searching for something that makes my life feel significant; I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life. The *presence of purpose* included the items: I understand my life' s meaning; My life has a clear sense of purpose; I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful; I have discovered a satisfying life purpose; My life has no clear purpose (the final item being reverse coded).

The MLQ was utilized in the research presented in Articles II and III.

Moran's (2014b) Purpose Characteristics Scale was also utilized in order to investigate the purpose profiles that are discussed in Article II. This scale included

a total of 17 items, such as the following: I am engaged now in activities that support this purpose; this purpose will benefit ideas or knowledge domains; I have the knowledge and skills to pursue this purpose; I will have opportunities to act on this purpose; and this purpose will benefit me. These were measured on a five-point Likert scale with 1=not at all likely and 5=extremely likely.

In addition to the MLQ, the pre- and post-field education measures in Article III included Moran's (2014a) scale on Confidence and Satisfaction in Making an Impact via different means of helping and social advocacy. For this scale Moran (2014a) adapted aspects of Morton's (1995) Service Preference Questionnaire. The confidence measure (α=.74) included the following items: I have confidence in my ability to 1) directly help other people, 2) set up and start an organization that helps, 3) advocate for social improvements. The satisfaction dimension (α=.68) included the following three items: Over the course of my life, I would feel satisfied if I made an impact by 1) directly helping other people, 2) setting up organizations that help, 3) advocating for social improvements. The alphas represent pre-field education measures.

The following questions from Magen's (1998) Life Aspiration Questionnaire were also used in this research: 1) What do you think is your life purpose? 2) Why do you want to accomplish this purpose? and 3) What makes this life purpose important to you? The first two questions were the basis for the qualitative analysis presented in Article I, and all three questions were the basis for the analysis presented in Article III. An open question, namely, What was your most influential field education experience and why?, taken from Moran's (2014a) semester end survey and derived from Moran and Mariano (2013), was the basis of the open analysis discussed in Article III. McMillan and Chavis's (1986) conceptualization of a sense of purpose was also utilized as a theoretical framework in that analysis.

5.6 Data analysis

5.6.1 Deductive and inductive content analysis

Inductive and deductive content analyses (see Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) were conducted in the course of this research as a means of evaluating the students' open answers to the questions presented above. In general, the aim of content analysis "is to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon and the outcome of the analysis is concepts and categories describing the phenomenon" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108). In the present thesis, the unit of analysis was defined as a meaning unit that can contain words, sentences, or paragraphs that are related to each other through their content and contexts (see Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

Overall, the coding included the following phases: 1) Making sense of the data as a whole by reading it through many times, 2) deciding upon or developing

the analysis matrixes, 3) coding the data according to these categories, and 4) quantifying the categories (see Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The deductive approach was applied in testing pre-existing theories based on categorization matrixes derived from previous research (see Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Robert and Robins's (2000) Life Goals Questionnaire was used as a deductive framework for analyzing the students' life goal contents. Those categories that did not fit this framework, but represented specified life goal contents were created inductively. Also the life goal contents were differentiated into self-benefiting, self- and family-benefiting, and self-and-unknown-other benefiting based on Bronk and Finch's (2010) categorizations and Moran's (2009) studies on youth purposes. Previous studies (Bundick & Tirri, 2014; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2015) were also used as the basis for separating the students' self-focused hedonistic and economic life goals from goals that included some anticipated beyond-the-self aspects: relationships, or social, religious, political influence, and aesthetic goals. The inductively-created categories missing from Robert and Robins's (2000) instrument were happiness, self-actualization, and health. Their self- and -other focus was estimated by the authors with regard to how the students described these categories on a general level, which was mostly as individual level entities. Therefore, these goals were identified as self-focused. In quantifying the results, all separate contents mentioned by a student within an answer were calculated once, even if the same content was mentioned several times in the answer.

Table 2 presents the life goal contents of the student participants with quotations.

In Table 3 the students' justifications for their life goals are presented with quotations. The main determinant in this analysis were the beneficiaries identified by the students as profiting from their life goals: did the students address the benefits to themselves only or also to their families and to unknown others? (see Bronk & Finch, 2010; Moran, 2009).

Table 2. Life goal contents of Social Service students

Categories	Quotations from students
Relationships	The purpose of my life is to start a family.
Hedonistic	To find pleasures in life.
Social	I also want to help others and do something for others.
Economic	Your pay should guarantee a reasonable living.
Religious (including spiritual growth)	Continue spiritual growth as a human being.
Political Influence (including general willingness to advance the collective good)	I also want to influence society.
Aesthetics	To develop as a dancer.
Happiness	To be happy.
Self-actualization (doing personally meaningful things and work)	I know what I am interested in and what kinds of things I want to work with: I just need an avenue to express those desires.
Health and well-being	To be as [happy] and as healthy as possible.

Table 3. Social services students' justification for their goals: Focus on self and others

Categories	Quotations from students
Self	To live a good life according to your inner truth. In that way I can actualize who I really am.
Self and others: family	A good profession is important in order for me to provide for my child and family: to provide them with everything they need.
Self and others: general pro-social reasoning	I have the opportunity to realize my full potential and have an obligation to do so for the collective good. Equality is important to me; I cannot tolerate inequality.

Inductive content analysis was also performed in order to determine the students' perceptions of the role of purpose in their lives and helping unknown others (presented in Article II). In the beginning the first author created a preliminary coding scheme for how the role of purpose was perceived in the students' open answers and why they want to help unknown others. After determining these preliminary codes, the second author coded 30 percent of the answers, and the final coding scheme was collaboratively created.

The entire set of data was independently coded according to this scheme by both the first and the second authors. Variations within coding were then checked, and all categories in which there were differing opinions were discussed and coded together. The students' purpose profiles created in the statistical analysis were taken into consideration in the final analysis, and the results were quantified in order to determine whether students in different profiles differed in their views.

All separate roles of purpose and perceptions on helping were identified in each student's answer, and these separate contents were calculated once for an answer.

Table 4 presents the coding scheme for the students' perceptions of the roles of purpose and of helping. In relation to the students' perceptions of their reasons for helping unknown others, the following separate categories were identified: helping for perceived self-benefits, helping based on self-awareness and one's own well-being, and helping based on values. In the first category, the students described how helping benefited themselves in some way; in the second category the students addressed how their personal well-being and self-awareness were related to helping others and in the third category, the students specified a value or guideline for why they considered helping others to be important.

Table 4. Perceptions of the roles of purpose and helping

Categories	Quotations from students
Perceptions of the role of purpose	
Happy and pleasurable life	To do things which make me happy. To lead a life that feels pleasant.
Good life	My purpose in life is to lead a good life.
Value-driven life	To take care of other people and construct a world that is as equal as possible because there is lot of inequality in the world.
Perceptions of helping	
Helping for perceived self-benefits	Helping work is wonderful. I get a lot out of it.
Helping based on self-awareness and one's personal well-being	My purpose is my well-being – in order to help others to be well.
Helping based on values	I want to promote people's well-being, prevent ill-being, and bring happiness and joy because I believe that everybody deserves to be happy irrespective of who they are.

The answers to the question about the most influential field education (Moran & Mariano, 2013 in Moran, 2014a) were also first analyzed inductively. The most often mentioned aspects of an influential field education experience were related to a sense of community. For that reason, all contents related to a sense of community were analyzed using the coding framework as defined by McMillan and Chavis (1986). This framework was chosen for its clarity and comprehensiveness. Sense of purpose was defined as 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs (reinforcement), and 4) emotional connections. The other two main categories in addition to the sense of the community were identified as learning professional competencies and learning related to oneself (see Table 5).

When it was difficult to identify the meaning of an answer, that answer was omitted from the analysis. In the omitted answers, the students had addressed such

things as working with a specific client group, but did not specify exactly what was meaningful in working with the group. Even more generally, ambiguous answers were removed from the qualitative analysis, leaving N=137 answers analyzing the life goal contents (Article I), N=146 answers analyzing the role of purpose and helping (Article II), and N=103 analyzing meaningful field education experiences.

The most influential field education experiences were 1) experiences of a sense of community with specified subcategories from McMillan and Chavis (1986), 2) learning professional competencies, and 3) learning related to oneself. After all meaning units (F=157) were coded in relation to the most influential field education experiences, the units were further analyzed by determining whether they included other-focused justifications. In practice, it was identified whether a student explicitly addressed a perspective in the influential field education experiences other than his or her own, such as addressing a client's perspective or considering how one's actions helped or influenced the clients or the field education community.

The category of influence as a whole was therefore identified as including the other-focus because in this category, the student described the impact of his or her activities on others. Some students addressed the perspective of the client from the field community in relation to learning professional competencies or in relation to encounters in general. The categories of fulfillment of needs and emotional connections include more interpretation than other categories. All contents, including encounters with clients or community as the most influential, were identified as emotional encounters, even if the students rarely described the actual emotions involved. Also in the fulfillment of needs category the students' answers were interpreted as a fulfillment of a need, such as to be recognized, valued, and provided with feedback (i.e., Rodgers, 1969). Please see table 5 for the categorizations with sample student quotations.

Table 5. The most influential field education experiences

Categories	Quotations from students
Experiences of a sense of community	
Membership	I was openly accepted as part of the team, and I felt part of the team, even though I wasnot an employee.
Influence (includes other-focus)	I got people excited about the activities, and I got them to open up.
Fulfillment of needs	The way I was accepted as part of the team]. I was trusted with a fair amount of responsibility, and I received lot of encouraging and positive feedback.
Emotional Connections	I was able to establish a relationship with a client that enabled him to accept my help, and the help was successful. (with other-focus)
Learning professional competencies	[I learned through encounters with children]. These taught me to consider the needs and wishes of quiet children. (with other-focus)
Learning related to oneself	Learning new aspects of myself.

5.6.2 Statistical analysis

Article I presents descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) derived from Robert and Robins's (2000) Life Goals Questionnaire. In order to study the students' purpose profiles (Article II), the following methods were used along with presenting means and standard deviations. Pearson's correlations were calculated to study the different domains of purpose and their relationships. These domains were selected from the existing Meaning of Life Questionnaire by Steger et al. (2006) and from the dimensions in Moran's (2014b) Purpose Characteristics Scale after performing exploratory factor analysis. SPSS version 22 was used for the statistical analysis.

Because Moran's (2014b) Purpose Characteristics Scale had not previously been used in a Finnish context, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on it. The original instrument included 17 items that measured different aspects of purpose. Items that severely damaged the assumptions of normality (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999, p. 283) were removed; in other words, if the communalities were less than .4 and items that loaded over .4 on two factors were removed, 13 factors were left in the final EFA. Two items that had cross-loadings over .32 were left for analysis (see Costello & Osborne, 2005) and interpreted: these loadings indicated that students link commitment and confidence with their purpose to benefit themselves and their families. The determinant .001, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure .895, and Bartlett's test of Sphericity p = .000 confirmed the sampling adequacy (Field, 2012). Maximum likelihood was chosen as an extraction method and Direct Oblimin as a rotation as recommended by Costello and Osborne (2005). Instead of orthogonal rotation, Direct Oblimin was chosen, as it allows correlation between factors. This in turn provides perhaps a more accurate picture of the reality, as variables rarely function independently of one another in the social or educational sciences (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

In the EFA, a three-factor structure was chosen, based on visual inspection of a scree plot and on the basis of eigenvalues that exceed 1 (Costello & Osborne, 2005). These factors were called 1) actualization of purpose, 2) beyond-the-self and 3) self and family as beneficiaries. The first factor explained 47.36 percent of the variance with eigenvalue 6.157 and Cronbach's alpha .888. The second factor explained 13.27 percent of the variance (eigenvalue = 1.725, Cronbach alpha = .778), and the final factor explained 8.17 percent (eigenvalue = 1.063, alpha = .851). All together these factors explained 68.8 percent of the variance. The first two factors – actualization of purpose and beyond-the-self – were included in the cluster analysis for studying purpose profiles of social services students in the data.

In the cluster analysis, a K-means algorithm was utilized for the sake of easy implementation, efficiency, and empirical success (Jain, 2010). Several factor solutions were tested, and a three- cluster solution was chosen on the basis of its theoretical soundness (Naes, Brockhoff, & Tomic, 2010). The clustering variables

were search for purpose, presence of purpose (Steger et al., 2006), actualization of purpose; beyond-the-self (Moran, 2014b) and varied statistically significantly ($p = .000$) in the profiles with effect sizes ranging from .22 to .55, indicating medium to large effect (Cohen, 1992, p. 157).

A one-way ANOVA was utilized in comparing the profiles with both Bonferroni post-hoc tests and Games-Howell. Bonferroni post-hoc tests were used for actualization of purpose and beyond-the-self components as the variances were equal according to Levene's test with $p > .05$. For variances that were unequal according to the test with $p < .05$ (search for and presence of purpose), Games-Howell was used (see Field, 2012, p. 459).

For pre- and post-field education measures (Article III), a non-parametric Wilcoxon-signed rank test was used to test the differences with respect to sense of purpose (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006) as well as students' confidence and satisfaction in making an impact during their lifetimes through helping and social advocacy (Moran, 2014a). This test was chosen because the differences were not normally distributed on these scales according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with a p-value of .000 (see Petrie & Watson, 2013, p. 370). For statistically significant changes in the measures, the effect size was calculated by dividing the z score by the square root of 226 as the number for all observations (see Field 2012, p. 234, p. 248).

6 RESULTS

6.1 Social services students' life goals within a framework of purpose (Article I)

As presented in Article I (Manninen et al., 2018a), the most important life goals for social services students are relationship goals (M=4.27, SD=.81), hedonistic goals (M=3.98, SD= .70), and social goals (M=3.71, SD=.79) when measured on a five-point Likert scale with Robert and Robins's (2000) Life Goals Questionnaire. Economic goals were given moderate emphasis (M=2.93, SD= 78). Religious (M=1.89, SD=1.05), political (M=1.87, SD=.84), and aesthetic (arts-related) goals (M=1.83, SD= .92) were considered less important.

Goals that were not included in Robert and Robins's (2000) questionnaire, but appeared in the open answers were happiness (60 %, n=82), self-actualization (38 %, n=52) and health and well-being (17%, n=23). Happiness was the most often mentioned goal in the open answers, with the second most often mentioned being relationships (51%, n=70). The third most often stated goal was to be able to actualize one's desires and aspirations through personally meaningful things and work. Quantitative and qualitative findings seem to be in line with each other, although Robert and Robins's (2000) questionnaire lacked the inductively-formed life goal categories of happiness, self-actualization, and health and well-being.

The division between self- and other-focused goals (see Bronk & Finch, 2010; Moran, 2009) was based on previous research (Bundick & Tirri, 2014; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2015). Overall, the students seem to endorse the following self-focused life goals: hedonistic, economic, happiness, self-actualization, and health. Of the other-focused goals, relationships and social life goals were the most important. Less significance was placed on other-focused religious, politically influential, and aesthetic goals.

The goals of helping others in need and volunteering in the community were considered important among the answers given on a five-point Likert scale (M=3.71, SD=.79). Among the students' open answers, 25 percent (n=34) identified helping people one does not know as one of their life goals. Political or communal influence was described by 19 percent (n=26) as one of their goals, often in general terms of wanting to influence the world positively.

Justifications of the students' life goals were classified into one of three main categories in terms of whether the goals 1) benefit oneself only, 2) benefit oneself and one's family or 3) benefit oneself and people whom one does not know or the collective good in general. This deductive analysis was based on Bronk and Finch's (2010) categorization and on Moran's (2009) notions about pro-social

moral reasoning as indicative of purpose. It was found that 59 percent (n=81) of the students defined their goals through self-focus only. Eighteen percent (n= 24) addressed the benefits of their goals to those closest to them, and 23 percent (n=32) justified their goals through both personal meaningfulness and through general pro-social value and benefit.

As a conclusion, it can be estimated that 23 percent of students were purposefully oriented to their future helping profession, and their professional goals seem to be integrated into their personal life goals. Eighteen percent of the students seemed to find purpose among relationship-related goals, namely, family and friends. Overall, the students perhaps aimed at finding a purpose among their closest relationships, in the pursuit of happiness, and in helping unknown others, goals that seemed to have the highest value to the students (Manninen et al., 2018a).

The social services students in this study represent life pursuits similar to those of Finnish youth in general, such as being family oriented, valuing close relationships, and helping other people (Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Myllyniemi, 2016). In a recent study by Pessi et al. (2018), the things most sacred to Finns were love and close relationships, features that can also be perceived from the perspective of what is valued most and what people may pursue in their lives. Most of the social services students were rather self-oriented in their life goals, which seems to be a general tendency of young adults in individualistic Western societies (Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Bronk, 2014; Damon, 2009; Moran, 2009) and surprisingly also in some collectivist cultures such as in Iran (Hedayati et al., 2017).

6.2 Profiles of purpose, perceptions of the role of purpose, and helping unknown others (Article II)

Finnish social services students' purpose profiles, perceptions of the role of purpose, and why they wanted to help unknown others were investigated and presented in Article II (Manninen et al., 2019). The profiles were based on cluster analysis. Among the profiles, the following components of purpose differed statistically significantly ($p = .000$): search for purpose, the presence of purpose, actualizing purpose, and a beyond-the-self orientation. As expected, the search for and the presence of purpose were negatively correlated with each other (r =-.373, $p < .01$); presence of purpose was strongly correlated with actualization of purpose (r= .673, $p < .01$), and a beyond-the-self orientation was moderately correlated with actualization of purpose (r=.387, p<.01).

Based on these dimensions, three separate profiles – Dabblers (57 %, n=86), Purposeful (25.2 %, n=38), and Dreamers (17.9 %, n=27) – were found and can be theoretically justified (Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009; see also Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016). According to a one-way ANOVA with both Bonferroni and Games-Howell (unequal

variances according to Levene's test = $p < .05$) post-hoc tests, there were statistically significant differences ($p = .000$) between the groups in all these dimensions with effect sizes ranging from .451 to .555. A big effect was thus indicated except for the beyond-the-self dimension, which had a medium effect of .22 (Cohen, 1992, p. 157).

According to the results of this study, the Dabblers and the Purposeful seemed very similar except that Dabblers continued to search for their purposes (M=5.68, SD=.76). It must be noted here that the search for and presence of purpose were rated on a seven-point Likert scale, while other purpose characteristics were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Purposeful students showed the highest degree of presence of purpose (M=6.14, SD=.55), the lowest degree of search for purpose (M=3.72, SD=1.20), the highest actualization of purpose (M=4.10, SD=.53), and high values for beyond-the-self concerns (M=3.88, SD=.92). The Dreamers were searching for their purposes (M= 5.53, SD=1.00), but they seemed to lack the skills to actualize their purposes (M=2.53, SD=.72), and they are not very concerned about the beyond-the-self implications of their purpose (M=2.52, SD=1.04). They showed the lowest degree of presence of purpose (M=3.45, SD=1.01).

Based on this diversification of profiles, the questions of the role of purpose desired in life and why the students had the professional goals of wanting to help and benefit unknown others were investigated in the open answers. The initial analysis was conducted separate from the profile information, but the profiles were added to the analysis when the results were quantified in order to determine whether the profiles differed in the open answers.

As a result (Manninen et al., 2019), in reference to the profile representations presented above, having a purpose led to a value-driven life more often for the Purposeful (n=16, 45%) than for the Dabblers (n=25, 29%) and the Dreamers (n=1, 4%). The Purposeful also showed more value-driven helping motives (n=8, 22%) in comparison with Dabblers (n=12, 14%) and Dreamers (n=0). Furthermore, the Purposeful indicated more often than others that helping should be based on self-awareness (n=6, 17%). A more or less equal number of students in all profiles perceived that helping somehow benefited them. Despite the differences between profiles, most of the students in all profiles perceived the role of purpose as leading to a happy and pleasurable life (68%, n= 99) as well as some form of good life (47%, n= 68). A value-driven life was addressed in 29 percent (n=42) of the answers.

Generally, based on the open answers, most of the students did not seem to be aware of the values that guide their lives or steer their helping activities. According to Moran (2009), this is rather indicative of Dabblers, who may be engaged in pro-social activities such as pursuing a helping profession, yet may not be aware of the reasons why they are engaged in it nor are they capable of providing pro-social justifications for their pursuits and therefore cannot be considered as having a genuine purpose. Although the Dabblers in this study experienced a relatively

high presence of purpose, statistically the continued search for new purposes is negatively correlated with the sense of purpose as defined earlier.

6.3 Helping as a purpose and meaningful field education experiences (Article III)

The purpose of Article III was to explore the meaningful field education experiences of social services students (N=113) and determine how their helping-related goals and sense of purpose developed during these experiences. Field education was defined as learning in service, which usually supports purpose development whenever students actively participate in concrete activities for the benefit of clients and the field education community as a whole (see Malin et al., 2013).

The study found that a sense of purpose developed among social services students during their field education, because after that experience, the students felt less need to search for a purpose ($Z= -3.974$, $p = .000$, $r = -.26$) when measured on a seven-point Likert scale with the change from $M = 5.19$, $SD=1.25$ to $M = 4.70$, $SD=1.39$ with a medium effect (-.26) (Manninen et al., 2018b). In the perceived presence of purpose, there were no statistically significant changes, although there was a tendency towards an increase in purposefulness (Manninen et al., 2018b, p. 53).

In the study, statistically significant differences ($Z= 6.583$, $p = .000$, $r = .44$) were also measured by examining the students' confidence in helping and advocating for social improvements, both of which can be considered central to their future social pedagogical work (see Social Services Curriculum, 2019). After the field education, this confidence, measured on five-point Likert scale, registered $M = 3.33$, $SD=73$, whereas before the field education the measures showed $M = 2.71$, $SD=66$. There were no statistically significant changes in the students' satisfaction in making an impact through helping and advocating for social improvements in the course of their lifetimes. Yet this measure was already on a relatively high level before the field education, showing $M = 3.96$, $SD=.80$ on a five-point Likert scale.

With regard to the most influential field education experiences, the students most frequently mentioned their community-related experiences ($f= 77$, 49%), rated their learning of professional competencies second ($f=52$, 33%), and rated third the learning related to oneself, defined as increased self-awareness ($f= 28$, 18%) (Manninen et al., 2018b). The students' experiences of a sense of community were specified in more detail by using McMillan and Chavis's (1986) framework. According to this framework, the sense of purpose was further categorized into the areas of 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) fulfillment of needs, and 4) emotional connections.

Of these dimensions, the emotional connections were addressed most frequently (f=27), yet these largely reflected personal meaning only, with a mere nine meaning units including the explicated other-focus. Seventeen meaning units included influence on clients and on the field education community, defined as including the other-focus. Generally, the students explicitly addressed perspectives other than their own in 29 meaning units of the total of 157 among the most influential field education experiences.

Thus, on the basis of this study (Manninen et al., 2018b), it can be concluded that the students identified helping as an important lifetime goal, and they felt relatively satisfied in making an impact through helping and social advocacy. Yet the importance of this life goal did not increase after concretely helping the social services clients in field education.

The students' professional competencies, or in other words, their confidence in helping and in social advocacy seemed to increase with field education based on both the statistical and qualitative measures. And generally, we can estimate that the students' experienced sense of purpose developed – most likely through the experiences of community, heightened professional competencies, and increased self-awareness as learning new aspects of oneself. In previous studies, these aspects have been identified as being important in purpose development by providing a sense of community (Tirri & Quinn, 2010), developing skills in actualizing one's life goals (Damon, 2008), and promoting self-awareness with regard to one's pursuits (Moran, 2009).

Helping seemed to be a personally meaningful long-term goal for the students, but its pro-social meaning was rarely explicated as being an influential aspect (Manninen et al., 2018b). The most influential field education experience infrequently included reflections on a client's perspective or on the field education community as a whole. Based on all studies presented in this thesis, it can be conjectured that the minority of students might have already found a purpose in helping unknown others, but many others may still aim at finding a purpose there (Manninen et al., 2018a; 2018b, 2019).

6.4 Summary of the findings

Table 6 presents the study's core findings and categorizations.

Table 6. Summary of the main results

Life goal contents	Three most important life goals	Likert scale: 1) Relationships 2) Hedonistic 3) Social	Open answers: 1) Happiness 2) Relationships 3) Self-actualization
	Three least important life goals	1) Aesthetics 2) Political 3) Religious	1) Aesthetic 2) Religious 3) Health
Justification of life goals: Who will benefit from them	Self Self and family Self and unknown others	n=81 n=24 n=32	
Possible purposes of the students	• Familial purpose • Helping unknown others and advocating for social improvements	Please note: these long-term goals were addressed with both personal and pro-social meaning, actualizing these pro-social goals is an important aspect of having a genuine purpose (Damon et al., 2003). It is estimated that the students aim at finding a purpose in the pursuits that they rate with the highest importance.	
Purpose profiles	Dabbler • High search, relatively high presence, high actualization, high beyond-the-self intentions Purposeful • Lowest search, highest presence, high actualization and high beyond-the-self intentions Dreamer • High search, lowest presence, low actualization, low beyond-the-self intentions	n=86 n=38 n=27	
Perceptions of the role of purpose (the sample as a whole)	Happy and pleasurable life Good life Value-driven life	n=99 n=68 n=42	
Perceptions of helping (the sample as a whole)	For perceived self-benefits Based on values Based on self-awareness and one's own well-being	n=23 n=20 n=15	
The most meaningful field education experiences	Experiences of a sense of community Learning professional competencies Learning related to oneself – interpreted as furthered self-awareness Meaningful experience included other-focused reasoning such as one's influence on clients or the field education community and considering encounters also from other than one's own perspective	f=77 f=52 f=28 f=29 out of F=157 in total	
Development of the sense of purpose in field education	Search for purpose Presence of purpose	Statistically significant decrease with medium effect size (-.26) No statistically significant changes	
Development of helping orientation in field education	Confidence in helping and advocating for social improvements Satisfaction over the course of life to make an impact by helping others and advocating for social improvements	Statistically significant increase with relatively large effect size (.44) No statistically significant changes	

With regard to Table 6, it is important to remember that these calculations and categorizations are rough estimates of the kinds of purposes that the students may have and how they seem to relate to the long-term goals of helping unknown others, for example. In real life, the students' perceptions of these topics may be fluid, changing, and complex. However, the author wants to make some points and draw some conclusions based on the summarized results, as follows:

- According to this case study, Finnish social services students represent a purpose profile and long-term goals similar to those valued by Finns in general as well as by many young adults around the world, including a focus on the self (see Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Bronk, 2014; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009) and on those in one's immediate circles (see Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; DeRuyter, 2002; Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2005; Moran, 2009; Pessi et al., 2018; Rogoff, 2003).
- Based on the results as a whole, it is estimated that most students aim at finding purpose in familial matters and in other long-term goals on which they place importance.
- Search for purpose correlates negatively with the presence of purpose; most of the students in this study seemed to search for a purpose.
- Only a minority of the students studied here addressed the values that steer their lives.
- Those students who mentioned helping in their open answers described it through the benefits to themselves, but also through the values and helping goals based on self-awareness and personal well-being.
- Overall, the number of students who discussed helping in their open answers was relatively low.
- An experienced sense of community was the students' most meaningful experience during their field education.
- Service-related learning in field education furthered the students' sense of purpose, since afterwards they were less occupied with searching for purpose.
- Service-related learning increased the students' professional skills in helping and social advocacy.
- As educators, we could pay attention to this heightened search for purpose by our students and address their search by providing education for purpose and existentially-sensitive education (see Ubani, 2013).
- Generally, helping students develop their self-awareness seems to be of importance (see Barlow & Hall, 2007; Marlowe et al., 2015; Moran,

2009; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Schinkel et al., 2016; Trevithick, 2014; Urdang 2010; Valutis et al., 2012).

- A sense of community (i.e., Tirri & Quinn, 2010) is also a factor that could be addressed in educational programs.
- Reasons for a focus on oneself may be a heightened search for purpose and lack of self-awareness (questions of one's identity) as well as possible vulnerabilities in the students' own lives which were addressed in the authors' ongoing, yet unpublished research. Focus on oneself and a continued search for purposes may be related to a diffuse identity profile (see Marttinen, 2017).
- The question is not about whether the students want to help unknown others (they do); the question is about helping them to identify all possible reasons for their desire to become professional helpers and helping the students define the social and societal relevance and value of their helping activities.
- Addressing life purpose as a central concern seems imperative in relation to social services students and their education, but it may also be of importance to other helping professions as well as to young people and young adults in general.
- This case study and many other purpose-related studies (i.e., Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; Hedayati et al., 2017; Moran, 2009) can be identified as calls for action to further people's interest and activities for the common good and generally help people to identify factors that bring or could bring meaning to their lives.
- It is particularly important to help those students identify their purpose who will work with the most vulnerable people in society and to support them in finding a purpose. In the best case, this scenario will generate accumulative good deeds for the common good.
- A professional in social services possesses various competencies that are addressed, for example, in the competence areas of the bachelor's degree in social services (see Social Services Curriculum, 2019). The present study mostly touches on the competence areas of ethics and participatory, critical societal competence. Developing purposeful helping activities could play a significant role in developing these competences.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Integration of results and general discussion

The purpose of this case study was to examine the life purposes of Finnish social services students. The examination involved identifying the students' life goal contents, their purpose profiles and their perceptions of the role of purpose in their lives as well as their conceptions of helping unknown others. It also took into account their meaningful field education experiences. The participants were social services students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and social pedagogy was the main emphasis in these students' curriculum (see Social Services Curriculum, 2019).

The study revealed that a number of students seem to exhibit a familial purpose or purpose in helping others which they explain with both self-and other-focused justifications. However, majority of the students may aim at finding a purpose in close relationships, in leading exciting, happy, and pleasurable lives, and to some extent in helping unknown others. These students largely justified their goals through personal meaning alone and not in reference to the pro-social, beyond-the-self-component of purpose. Thus, these students do not demonstrate having genuine purpose, according to the definition proposed by Damon et al. (2003).

Most of the students had already found some meaningful things in life to pursue, but they were still searching for purpose (Manninen et al., 2019). The students in the study felt relatively skilled and competent in actualizing their purposes. Approximately one-fourth of them exhibited a profile of being purposeful (Manninen et al., 2019), a proportion which is in line with other youth purpose studies (Bronk, 2014; Damon, 2008; Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2009; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016). The purposeful students were more able to define values in relation to their pursuits as well as in helping unknown others (Manninen et al., 2019). However, the number of students who clearly defined helping unknown others as their purpose was relatively low in the sample as a whole, especially in view of the results of the qualitative analysis (Manninen et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Personal experiences of community, increased self-awareness, and development in professional skills seemed to be most meaningful for students during their field education, after which the search for purpose lessened (Manninen et al., 2018b).

What do these results mean with regard to the education of social services students or generally with regard to the education of other helping professionals, such as therapists, priests, teachers, doctors, and so on? (See Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971.) Broadly, all helping professions and development in these professions should be based on self-awareness (e.g., Marlowe et al., 2015; Urdang, 2010; Valutis et

al., 2012; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006) as well as on continued reflection on professional activities and their personal meanings and ethics (see Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Urdang 2010; Marlowe et al., 2015; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Holmström, 2014; McBeath & Webb, 2002; Rogoff, 2003). Based on this study, it seems important to help students develop self-awareness in their education for the helping professions by asking themselves such questions as the following: What are the reasons I am studying to become a professional helper? What is the social significance of my helping activities 1) to the client, 2) to the client's network and his or her community and 3) to the wider society?

When we say that professional helpers benefit the common good, we should somehow be able to make this concrete for our students. What common good are professional helpers trying to develop? Professional helping can be seen, for example, as an investment in behalf of an individual client and in behalf of the common good. It is humanly important to try to help people by increasing their quality of life and ease their suffering, as well as help people to find meaning and purpose in their lives (see Frankl, 1959). By investing in individuals and in groups of people and communities, we are also promoting the important values of social justice, equality, freedom, and humanity (see Spicker, 2017; also Dewey, 1916/1997; Freire, 1970/1996; Rogers, 1969). As Spicker (2017, p. 88), writes,

> The development of society for the future depends on doing work to safeguard future generations, equipping young people with skills, building roads, schools and public amenities, promoting culture and stewardship of the environment.

In doing this, helping professionals in general play a key role in developing responsible societies.

For both individual and societal reasons, professional helpers should have a clear roadmap by which to steer their helping activities. Identifying purpose as a backbone of helping could provide such a roadmap (see Han, 2015; Moran, 2009). In the end, purpose refers to personally meaningful long- term life goals by which to guide oneself and to find ways to benefit the world beyond oneself (Damon et al., 2003). Based on these individual but socially-oriented purposes, social bonds could be built upon shared interests to enhance civic and societal well-being in general (see Salonen & Joutsenvirta, 2018).

The reason purpose is particularly meaningful in the education of social services students has to do with its connection to social pedagogy and particularly to ethics. At the core of social pedagogical practice, there should be respect for people as resourceful agents, development of their full potential, and construction of a more just society for all (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). Social pedagogy addresses action orientation and continuous and conscious ethical considerations in client work

(Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). Respect for human dignity and for people's otherness should provide a strong moral basis to guide social services work (see Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). Purpose essentially includes this type of ethos and is therefore significant in the development of social pedagogical practices and education as a whole.

In even more concrete terms stemming from social pedagogical thought, social services students and professionals are often referred to as people who walk the path with the clients, accompanying them on every step of the way (see Mäkinen et al., 2009). Social services professionals are often the ones who work in the everyday contexts of their clients and in the very environments where people live, such as in children's homes working as social counselors or in all types of supported housing (Mäkinen et al., 2009; Social Services Curriculum, 2019). Social counselors should essentially pay attention to the social education of clients, help them identify and build support networks, and encourage them to find meaning and purpose in their lives and be connected to other people in order to live as resourceful agents (see for example, Chan, 2017, Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Lorenz, 2008; Storø, 2013; Úcar, 2013).

How can the road to purpose then be built into the educational practices and the development of curricula? The recommendations for curriculum development could follow what Ubani (2013) calls "existentially sensitive" education. In the end this is what life purpose is all about, namely, finding the deeper reason for one's existence, one's reason to be in this world and how one's contribution is significant to others (see Damon et al., 2003; Moran, 2009; Ubani, 2013).

Existentially sensitive, purpose education could be defined as

> recognising the students as existentially active beings by supporting the articulation of search for meaning, recognition of fundamentally defining issues of the individual (i.e., stories, experiences, people, hobbies) and promoting a coherent and purposeful lifestyle (Ubani, 2013, p. 42).

Existentially sensitive education for purpose could be at the very core of social pedagogical education and practices for social services students. The ethical and existential questions of a good life, moral values, the interrelation between man and society, and what is required for a good and dignified life (see Puolimatka, 2007) could be at the center of existentially sensitive social pedagogical purpose education.

Damon et al. (2003), Damon (2008), Moran (2009) as well as Ubani (2013) claim that, although knowing about purpose and pondering existential questions are not in themselves enough, these are important steps on the road to finding a life purpose. Purposes must be actualized and realized in order to become real (Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009). For this realization, service learning

has been suggested as an option (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Koshy & Mariano, 2011; Lim 2007). For example, in service-learning settings, students can be helped to see how, in many ways, they are dependent on others (Moran, 2018; Tirri & Quinn, 2010). Students should be provided with feedback (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Issac Koshy & Menon Mariano, 2011; Jongho et al., 2018; Lim 2007 Malin et al., 2013), especially by those who have been helped (Moran, 2017). Also according to this study, service-related learning in field education seemed to help students in their purpose development. What appeared to be central was exactly how the student felt: whether he or she felt perceived and welcomed as a community member and how he or she mattered in the community. Development of professional competencies also played a role in purpose development as did increased self-awareness (Manninen et al., 2018b).

According to Ubani (2013, p. 52), "teachers themselves should become aware of their own personal search for meaning, the basis of their values and beliefs and the effects these have on their lifestyle" in order to model this search for their students. "In the end, we are all subject to life journey in order to understand humanity in its all shades" (Ubani, 2013, p. 52).

The pro-social element of purpose places value on promoting the common good and socially sustainable societies (see Damon, 2008). Yet according to youth purpose studies, it seems to be a current trend in many countries and cultures for individualistic pursuits and the nuclear family and closest friends to be life's most significant aspects rather than considerations of the wider societal development and advancing the common good, for example, through politics, (i.e., Aapola-Kari & Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Bronk, 2014; Damon, 2008; Hedayati et al., 2017; Moran, 2009; Rogoff, 2003; McMahon, 2013). This might well affect the rather common experience of meaninglessness Western societies (Schinkel et al., 2016). Bringing purpose to the center of education for social services professionals and other helping professions could foster development toward the common good. Being focused only on self-serving pursuits or on people only in one's closest circles may in fact pose a threat to democratic societies (Damon, 2008).

Supporting students in becoming purposeful professional helpers could create a solid foundation for their professional identity (see Urdang, 2010; Marlowe et al., 2015; Valutis et al., 2012). Especially in the field of social services, this approach could help students to understand the moral grounds for their work (see Holmström, 2014; McBeath & Webb, 2002; also Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014) and facilitate the purpose development in social services clients (see Chan, 2017). It could be an important mission of social services and social work education to help students and professionals in the field as well as the clients therein to identify purposes that enhance their own well-being and also the well-being of others and dedicate themselves to these purposes (see Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; also Marttinen, 2017). In social work, a sense of purpose has been found to serve as a

buffer against emotional exhaustion (Itzick et al., 2018). Purposeful people have been found to experience well-being more often than those without purpose (Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003); they are reported to be more satisfied and committed to their work than are the non-purposeful (Dik et al., 2011; Itzick et al., 2016; see also Ponton et al., 2014). Non-purposeful social services practices could advance managerial approaches at work where real encounters and connections in support of a client may fail if workers fail to recognize the humanity and the moral basis of their actions (see Holmström, 2014; McBeath & Webb, 2002; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014).

Purpose in social services work could therefore be seen as a virtue (see Han, 2015; Moran, 2009), especially in relation to social pedagogical work, because it endorses the values of both individualism (genuine purposes are personally meaningful) and the values of community and the collective (genuine purposes benefit people in the community and the world beyond oneself). Purpose can also be studied in relation to the ethics of care, that is, the effort to achieve a balance in care for oneself vs. care for others (Gilligan, 1982/2003; Skoe, 1998).

In considering students' pursuit of happiness and a pleasurable life, Noddings (2003, p. 236) has stated:

> Most of us get the largest part of happiness from personal relationships and/or occupational life. However, community life and especially a democratic mode of living provide a foundation upon which these primary goods are built and thus make a substantial, if indirect contribution to happiness. Active participation in community life may also be a direct source of happiness.

If happiness is our main goal, then we should identify ourselves with deeper purposes in life. Identifying with these deeper purposes is associated with more enduring happiness than just concentrating on seeking happiness in transient pleasures (Ryff, 1989; De Ruyter, 2002).

7.2 Quality assessment and limitations

7.2.1 Validity of the study

The validity of a study is generally based on whether the instruments measured what they were supposed to measure and whether the results can be trusted (Cooligan, 1999). External or ecological validity refers to the generalizability of the results to other populations or other times (Cooligan, 1999), while internal validity is concerned with whether the research findings represent reality (Zohrabi, 2013). Construct validity on the other hand refers to the theoretical soundness of the results and whether the results can be theoretically justified (Cooligan, 1999).

As the main instruments, the Life Goals Questionnaire (Robert & Robins, 2000) and the Meaning of Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006) have been tested and validated; likewise, the other scales are based on previous research (Magen, 1998; Moran, 2014a, 2014b; Moran & Mariano, 2013). The results of this study seem to be in line with previous research on the subject of purpose (Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; Hedayati et al., 2017; Moran, 2009: Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016). The findings of the current study with respect to young people's goals in Finland appear to be in line with earlier findings (Aapola-Kari& Wrede-Jäntti, 2016; Helve, 2015; Myllyniemi, 2016). In addition, the findings represent values with regard to love and close relationships that are similar to the Finnish population as a whole (Pessi et al., 2018). Service-related learning in supporting purpose development has also been found in previous studies (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Koshy & Mariano; Jongho et al., 2018; Lim, 2007; Malin et al., 2013; Moran, 2017; Tirri & Quinn, 2010). Thus, it appears that the internal and construct validity of the study overall is relatively good, although there might have been some issues connected with the translated Finnish versions of the instruments. For example, in the original surveys carried out in an Anglo-Saxon context, the items intended to measure general interest and the value of aesthetics as representing life goals in music, dance, and writing have occupational and professional connotations in Finnish culture. The question is whether underlying and unexpressed assumptions were conveyed in the translations, even though the translations were largely literal. Lack of knowledge of underlying assumptions might have affected students' willingness to fill in the surveys. On the other hand, the author was present in almost all survey sessions in order to clarify terms and answer questions.

This exploratory case study is based on a small sample (N=151; N=113) of social services students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Finland; therefore the generalizability of the results as having external or ecological validity (Cooligan, 1999) is limited. Yet students from each year of study were represented, and therefore the sample represents relatively well the social services students at Metropolia. It can also be fairly expected that these results could be to some extent generalizable to social services students in Finland with the exception of students

at the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences who might have more faith-based purposes and helping approaches.

The field of social work and social services is also very much female driven, and females are overrepresented in the research (Liedgren & Elvhagen, 2015). This is true in the present study as well with 94 percent (n=142) of survey respondents being female in the first survey and 92 percent, (n= 104) in the pre-and post-field education surveys. This ratio of female to male students is rather representative of social services students at Metropolia, where usually less than ten percent of the students are male (Salonen, 2010, p. 164).

Case studies are well suited for studies of an exploratory nature and for times when a subject is encountered for the first time (Gerring, 2011). The principle of a novel object of research applies to this case study of Finnish social services students' purposes and their profiles and the development of purpose in field education. As a rule, the author has aimed to be as specific and transparent as possible in describing her practices so that readers can judge the validity and also the reliability of the study for themselves.

It must also be noted that with any Likert-scale answers there is always a risk of a social desirability bias. This refers to the tendency of people to respond to the scales in a socially desirable manner (Liedgren & Evlhage, 2015) and in terms of how they think they are expected to answer rather than basing their answers on their true feelings and perceptions (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 882). When a mixed-methods approach is used and students' open answers are analyzed along with quantitative measures to improve the validity of a study, this effect may be reduced, although it is not removed completely. The Likert-scale answers did not reveal how the respondents justified or reasoned-out their answers. Therefore, analysis of the open answers provides more in-depth and broader understanding.

Some of the open answers were rather short. Generalizing the results on the basis of these may pose a challenge. It must also be noted that this study is cross-sectional, and due to the limited number of participants in general, comparisons of purpose between different year groups were not made. Longitudinal studies with bigger samples are needed in order to determine how purpose develops during social services studies and how life goals may change with study and maturation.

7.2.2 Reliability

The reliability of the study refers to the ability of the measure to produce consistent results under different conditions (Field, 2012). As an internal consistency reliability measure, the Cronbach alphas within Robert and Robins's (2000) instrument were moderately low from α=.529 to α=.791, thereby indicating moderate internal consistency (see Field, 2012, p. 709). Although Kline (1999) has stated that when

dealing with psychological constructs, even values below .7 can be expected, Nunnally (1978) has suggested that in the early stages of research, values as low as .5 will be sufficient (Field, 2012, p. 709). The instruments that were used Articles II and III were more reliable. There the alpha values varied between α=.778 to α=.89 for the scales in Article II and from α=.68 to α=.89 for the scales in Article III. These can be considered as rather reliable measures (see Field 2012, p. 709).

In the qualitative analysis presented in Article I, interrater reliability was evaluated by calculating Cohen's Kappa values. The kappa measures of .61 to .80 (substantial agreement) and .81 to 1.0 (almost perfect agreement) were accepted after 40 percent of the answers were analyzed by the first and second authors of the article and by basing kappa calculations on these analyses (see Landis & Koch,1977). For the health and well-being category in which kappa remained .6, all answers were collectively coded and analyzed. Also for other disagreements, codes were checked by both authors and analyzed together.

For Article II, the entire data set was analyzed by the first and second authors and then the disagreements on collectively created coding categories were discussed and ambiguous cases clarified together. Even though these strategies were applied in the content analyses, it must be noted that content analysis in general is always a subjective form of analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). "There is always some degree of interpretation when approaching a text," according to Graneheim and Lundman (2004, p. 106). With regard to the most influential field education experiences, only the first author analyzed the open answers, but the analysis was checked completely after the peer review to see that all meaning units fit the categories that were created and to determine whether other-focus was somehow identifiable in the answers.

7.3 Ethical considerations

The principle of the Golden Rule has been used with regard to research ethics: consider putting yourself in the shoes of the research participant and show respect for your informants (Plowright, 2011). The author of this thesis did her best in trying to make sure that the students as research participants felt appreciated. The students' role as research participants and therefore as indirect developers of social services education was emphasized. The role of the author as a doctoral student was emphasized rather than her position as a senior lecturer in the social services curriculum at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Nevertheless, the students' participation in the study might have been affected by the fact that their teacher was requesting them to answer the surveys online. It might also have affected by the openness of the answers.

Filling out the surveys took place mostly during class time, which might have affected whether the students felt pressured. Many students asked if they had to answer the surveys; they were told that participation in all surveys was voluntary, and no one could be forced to provide answers. The collection of the survey data was explained to the students via email ahead of time as well as during the classes in which the students filled in the survey. Information about the study was also provided on the first page of each survey to clarify that, by responding to the survey, the student was thereby allowing his or her answers to be used for research purposes.

In practice, many students had opened the survey in Qualtrics, but decided to refrain altogether from answering the questions. The Qualtrics program used for the online data collection identified individual student respondents by their IP address. Naturally, the responses were not handled on the level of the individual student, and strict anonymity was guaranteed in further analysis and in handling the data and publishing the results. The topic of the study – namely, addressing the students' deeper pursuits in life –is ethically sensitive. At best, the results of this study support the development of social services education and facilitate further interest in purpose in social services and social work-related research and the implications that may follow from these.

7.4 Concluding remarks and recommendations for future studies

Purpose as a personally meaningful long-term life goal that includes pro-social moral considerations and implications (Damon et al., 2003; Moran, 2009) can provide direction in social services work that is considered emotionally demanding (Barlow & Hall, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Salo et al., 2016; Trevithick, 2014). A sense of purpose serves as a buffer against emotional exhaustion (Itzick et al., 2018) and having a purpose generally promotes well-being (Bronk, 2014; Damon et al., 2003; see also Marttinen, 2017) and committed work practices (Dik et al., 2011; see also Ponton et al., 2014). These in turn affect the quality of the services that are provided for clients in social services work.

People who have identified their own purposes are better able to foster the purpose development of others (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016; Tirri & Ubani, 2013), which is considered important in social services work (Chan, 2017). Considering, for example, work with children and young people in child protection in children's homes, social services professionals have a big impact on children in modeling values and higher-order goals (see Rogoff, 2003). Promoting purpose development in these children and in other social services clients is humanly important. And even more generally, developing purpose in others also has societal impacts when people find it personally meaningful to benefit other people and commit themselves to, for example, pro-social civic activities (see Malin et al., 2015). Purpose is likewise closely connected with social pedagogical practices that emphasize social responsibility (Hämäläinen, 2015) and general community orientation in people's activities (Eriksson, 2014; Hämäläinen, 2003, 2012, 2015; Stephens, 2013; Storø, 2013; Úcar, 2013).

On the basis of this thesis, it seems important to study further how purpose could be developed in students who are in social services and social work programs. Longitudinal and more in-depth research is needed in order to study this question. Generally, it would be important to investigate the students' ethical and overall moral approaches to life and how their definitions of a good life might affect their interactional work with clients. On the whole, the study of purpose among social work and social services students is new. It thus seems essential to explore how students justify service activities from pro-social and moral points of view (see Valutis et al., 2012). Studying purpose in relation to other helping professions seems of importance as well.

How purpose shields social services professionals' well-being at work could also be investigated as well as how in fact people with different purpose profiles experience their work. The association and differentiation between purpose and care reasoning (i.e., Gilligan, 1982/2003; Skoe, 1998) require further conceptualizations. The study of purpose is soundly justified in the field and offers great potential for

developing curricula in which learning for purpose and pro-social moral reasoning have been exemplified and realized in practice, for example, by developing service learning programs that take purpose into consideration as well as aspects of existentially sensitive education (see Ubani, 2013).

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